

FEMALE EDUCATION IN THE LATE SIXTEENTH AND EARLY SEVENTEENTH  
CENTURIES IN ENGLAND AND WALES: A STUDY OF ATTITUDES AND  
PRACTICE

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy:  
January 1996

Caroline Mary Kynaston Bowden

Institute of Education, University of London



## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

This thesis provides a study of attitudes and practice in respect of female education in England and Wales in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It begins with a review of primary and secondary sources, and throughout draws substantially upon personal documents consulted in collections of family papers covering a wide geographical area. These documents, it is argued are broadly representative of gentry families. Chapter Two examines the education of daughters; Chapter Three the role of women in marriage; Chapter Four motherhood. Each of these chapters examines the links between education and the roles girls and women fulfilled. Throughout these three chapters, contrasts and comparisons are drawn between prescriptive advice and practice. Chapter Five considers the difficult issue of standards in the education of girls and women, while the final chapter examines some of the outcomes of education in terms of women as intermediaries in informal power networks, estate and farm managers and educational benefactors and founders. The thesis draws conclusions in respect of the importance of education in permitting the developing role of women in both private and public spheres and examines the reasons for such changes. It also challenges existing theories regarding the differences between Catholic and Protestant attitudes to girls' education.

A substantial appendix listing some 870 educated and literate women of the period is provided, both to demonstrate the major sources for this study and to provide a basis for future research.

### Acknowledgements

The gestation of the thesis has been long and placed the usual demands on a supportive family, particularly my husband Richard. He has continued to believe that it could be done. My son, Tom, has given invaluable advice on textual matters. David Glennie has read the thesis with an eagle eye and his comments have led to many improvements in the writing. Joanne Nickels has saved me from despair over my lack of word processing skills on a number of occasions and led the way forward. Mary Prior gave me encouragement when it all began, pointing out sources and research already completed, and has continued to take a friendly interest as the study progressed. My supervisor, Richard Aldrich, has understood the need for encouragement as well as criticism and has been exacting in the standards he has set. To them, and the other historians who have advised, particularly in unfamiliar areas, my grateful thanks are hereby recorded.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	Introduction and sources	Page 5
CHAPTER TWO	Educating daughters: prescriptive advice, parental attitudes and practice.	Page 42
CHAPTER THREE	The role of women in marriage: prescriptive advice and practice.	Page 86
CHAPTER FOUR	Motherhood: prescriptive advice and practice.	Page 124
CHAPTER FIVE	Standards in women's education.	Page 160
CHAPTER SIX	Women as intermediaries, managers and benefactors: a study of the outcomes of literacy.	Page 203
CONCLUSION		Page 241
BIBLIOGRAPHY		Page 246
APPENDIX		Page 264
TABLES	Table One: Distribution of letters by decade.	Page 31
	Table Two: Analysis of the contents of women's letters for interests and relationships.	Page 35
	Table Three: Numbers of women sending letters in 13 gentry families.	Page 166
ILLUSTRATION	Examples of women's handwriting.	Page 163



## CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND SOURCES

Mary and Helen Copley, daughters of William and Magdalen Copley, were Catholic girls waiting in a London inn in 1610, before making their way illegally to join one of the English convents in the Low Countries. Magistrates in London, worried about a possible threat from Catholics following the assassination of Henry IV in Paris, used this as a pretext to enter the houses and lodgings of known sympathisers. A Justice of the Peace with a band of men entered the Copleys' room to search it for evidence of emigration and illicit books. They searched in vain; the girls had just enough time to hide their Catholic books and the money for the journey down their bed, leaving out only their Virgil as a 'safe' book to be found by the men.<sup>1</sup> Their ability to read Latin and their interest in Classical authors was in marked contrast to the educational experience of Magdalen Montague, also Catholic, daughter of Lord Dacre of Gilsland, who on five occasions between 1587 and 1604, put only her initials in beginners' writing at the end of her letters, suggesting a much lower standard of education.<sup>2</sup> This kind of contrast is repeated in the evidence from other families: the educational experience of girls of the landed classes was diverse in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Most evidence relating to girls' education does not come from quite such dramatic circumstances as the raid on the Copleys: it can be found among household and personal papers in the family collections of the gentry now deposited in many local record offices.

The evidence of the education of the Copleys and Magdalen Montague raises many questions about girls' education in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Dom Adam Hamilton, *English Augustinian Canonesses of St Monica's*, Edinburgh, Sands and Co., 1904, Vol.1, p114-5.

<sup>2</sup> Magdalen Montague's letters, B L Add MS 12,506 Vol.i, ff65, 101, 147, 159, 173.

late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. For example; how far were these girls representative of other Catholic girls, or girls from similar social backgrounds who were Protestant? Why did parents such as William and Magdalen Copley decide to educate their daughters to such a high standard? How far did women such as Magdalen Montague participate in activities in the public sphere outside the family and how important was education in enabling them to do so? How far is it possible to find evidence of girls' education outside the privileged landed classes?

To return to the examples: all these girls came from Catholic families and show the wide variation of educational standards within the same religious group.<sup>3</sup> Magdalen Montague came from an aristocratic background, but was less well educated than the Copley girls from a gentry family. Some historians have commented on a decline in teaching girls Latin in the latter part of the sixteenth century, but the Copley girls were only two of many girls who learned Latin.<sup>4</sup> Magdalen Montague's initials were made by someone unaccustomed to writing; pressing hard and moving the pen slowly over the paper. No evidence has been found that she was able to write her own letters, but she would have been able to read print at least and she participated in informal patronage networks with confidence. Some accounts of the Reformation have placed emphasis on the importance to Protestant Reformers of educating girls, with the implication that education was less important in Catholic families, but many other Catholic girls, besides the Copleys and Magdalen Montague, were educated to a similar standard.

Research already completed on girls' education in the period,

---

<sup>3</sup> In 1610, Catholics were a significant minority in England. John Bossy estimated that 50% of the population of England was Catholic in 1570, but that this had fallen to 25% by 1620. John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975, p183.

<sup>4</sup> For details of the level of girls' education, see Appendix.

has shown that the education that girls were given was intended by their parents to fit them for their future role as wives and mothers, and that very few parents considered a different future for them.<sup>5</sup> The resulting educational experience for girls was heterogeneous, ranging from the acquisition of basic reading skills to the ability to compose original prose and translate full-length plays. This variation in the provision of education was the result of a number of different factors affecting parents; perhaps the most immediate being the economic circumstances of the family, which in many cases severely restricted choice for poorer parents. Yet even within the wealthier classes, there were divergent views on the future for which they were preparing their daughters and the amount of education necessary. It is essential to examine both the evidence contained in personal documents as well as the advice given in the prescriptive literature, to explain the different experiences.

At the end of the sixteenth century in England, according to the prescriptive conduct books, the role of adult women was adjudged to lie within the household and family. This coincided with the views of most parents. The aim of virtually all parents was to see their daughters married and few women held formal positions outside the household, so it is within the context of the family that most evidence of women's activities is to be found. A study of girls' education in the early modern period is therefore focused on the family as a starting point.

Familial relationships have been at the centre of long term controversy among historians. Recent research on children has shown their importance to sixteenth-century parents, challenging the conclusions of Ariès and Lawrence Stone who found little evidence of affection. Based on contemporary autobiographical writings, personal documents and a re-

---

<sup>5</sup> See for example, Norma McMullen, *The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640, History of Education*, 1977, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp87-101.

interpretation of iconographical images, historians such as Linda Pollock have shown that parents in the early modern period experienced family life as diversely as modern parents, and that many took their responsibilities very seriously.<sup>6</sup> This concern is reflected in the care that parents took to provide education and training for their daughters' future. Research is beginning to appear examining the question of how far the term 'parents' can be said to represent the views of both spouses, and to explore the particular importance of mothers in the upbringing of children.<sup>7</sup> The general standard of parenting should not be overestimated; there were parents who neglected their children or who exhibited indifference or even cruelty towards them. Many orphaned children were undoubtedly exploited by adults, others were badly treated because of the economic circumstances of the family. For example, in the collections studied, cases of particularly mercenary negotiations over marriage arrangements were found in the Wynn of Gwydir papers where Sir John Wynn put financial considerations at the top of his agenda and one uncle was accused of virtually selling his orphaned nieces.<sup>8</sup>

One of the difficulties of the early modern period is the lack of personal documents which give access to the mental world of women. Letters, household account books and personal writings are the principal sources, but as these were less important than legal documents to the families concerned, consequently fewer of them have survived. Enough documents do remain, however, to test the prescriptive literature. Analysis of their letters makes it possible to chart the interests of a

---

<sup>6</sup> See for example Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-child Relations from 1500 to 1900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, and *A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children over Three Centuries*. London, Fourth Estate, 1987.  
Jean Wilson, *The Noble Imp: The Upper-class Child in English Renaissance Art and Literature*, *The Antiquaries Journal*, 1990, Vol. LXX Part II, pp360-379, and *Icons of Unity*, *History Today*, June 1993, pp14-20.

<sup>7</sup> For further discussion of this point, see p13 below.

<sup>8</sup> NLW, Aberystwyth, Wynn of Gwydir Papers; see for example, Nos. 187, 288, 335, 634, 642, 764, 770, 778, 806, 814, 981.

representative group of women of the gentry classes. In theory and in practice a woman's world was constricted. The patriarchal structure of the family and the recognition by most women of their husband's authority, meant that during the period under consideration, the attitude of husbands determined the role their wives played both within the family and the wider community.

The conduct books of the period give clear and quite precise guidelines on how women should behave, but a reading of documentary evidence shows that even within the same social groups the experience of wives varied enormously. The expectations both of parents for their daughters and husbands for their wives, need to be examined to seek an explanation for this. These expectations have significant implications for girls' education. For example, education would be an important component of the upbringing of girls if, as wives, they were to be able to manage an estate effectively and take a leading role in the upbringing of children, while their husbands were away on business. Many of the tasks, for example child-rearing and estate management, undertaken by women could have been accomplished by illiterate women and indeed had been in earlier periods. However, in the documents from the sixteenth century, there appears to be a recognition of the significance of literacy not only in enabling these tasks to be carried out with greater confidence and efficiency but also in expanding the areas of women's competence: for example women would be able to read appropriate texts to their children as part of their moral and religious education.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the significance of literacy for women, see Kusum Premi, *Why not educate girls?*, UNESCO Principal Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 1992. In this, the organisers of a scheme designed to be used in South-East Asia explained their reasons for encouraging female literacy; some of these have relevance to a study of female education in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Firstly, educated girls would contribute to an improved standard of living for the family. Secondly, an educated girl would have more self-confidence and be able to communicate with educated people. Thirdly, an educated girl would be able to marry an educated man and would not be exploited. Fourthly, an educated girl would be able to fulfil her potential and have more options when finding work.

In order to understand the educational experience of girls and its implications for the activities of adult women, this thesis considers the definition of education as it affected girls in the late sixteenth century. The themes of continuity and change will be examined within the context of girls' education over the period, taking account of the main influences on parents bringing up daughters. The role of women within the private sphere of the family and in the public sphere outside will also be considered. The importance of education in carrying out these roles will be evaluated, and an analysis of the educational standards reached will be based on the internal evidence of these documents. Educational experiences of Catholic and Protestant women will be compared in order to consider whether there were fundamental differences as a result of the religious division. The literature of the conduct books has already been extensively examined by historians: in this thesis an overview will be provided in order to make comparisons between theory and practice with the main emphasis on the realities. Constraints of space also limit the analysis of boys' education: it will be referred to when necessary in order to make comparisons with girls' education.<sup>10</sup>

### Review of existing literature

The growing interest in women's history has resulted in a substantial body of research and in the development of methodologies appropriate to the study of women's lives in the early modern period. As a result of this work, it is possible now to identify more clearly the main questions about girls'

---

<sup>10</sup> The prescriptive literature is the subject of Ruth Kelso's *Doctrine of the lady of the Renaissance*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2nd. ed. 1978; Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A study in the fortunes of scholasticism and medical science in European intellectual life*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980. A study of the ideas of the conduct books and their effects on attitudes towards women is incorporated in Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700*, London, Longman, 1984, and Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships 1500-1900*, London, Macmillan, 1994, see especially Chapter 2. See also Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womanhood, 1540-1620*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1984.

education and to approach evidence in new ways, in order to understand better the mental world of women in early modern England.

With the notable exception of Alice Clark, the first writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to publish historical works about women in the early modern period, primarily followed a biographical and descriptive approach. While these works give information about individual women, and provide references to documentary sources, they offer little in the way of a theoretical framework. It is, however, only by building a significant body of primary evidence that historians are able to substantiate the theories about the role of women which have been appearing more recently, and such biographical studies do have a place in the study of early modern women.<sup>11</sup>

The earliest significant work on girls' education in the Tudor period was Dorothy Meads' 1928 thesis 'An account of the Education of Women and Girls in England at the time of the Tudors'.<sup>12</sup> Meads examined schooling at different social levels and the use to which it was put. She concluded that even girls from poorer backgrounds received some schooling in a few places; literate women could be found outside the ranks of the gentry. Through reading Church records such as Archdeacons' Visitations, she found evidence not only of some girls attending petty schools, but also of a small number of women teachers in these schools. Meads also argued for a gendered terminology; the term 'educated' when applied to girls should

---

<sup>11</sup> Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*. First Published 1919. Third Edition 1992. London, Routledge. For biographical studies see for example; R Simpson, *The Lady Falkland, her life*, London, Catholic Publishing and Bookselling Co., 1861. Frances B Young, *Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke*, London, David Nutt, 1912. C A Bradford, *Blanche Parry*, London, Privately Printed, 1935. L L Worsworthy, *The Lady of Bleeding Heart Yard*, London, John Murray, 1935. Sylvia Freedman, *Poor Penelope: Lady Penelope Rich an Elizabethan Woman*, London, Windsor Press, 1983.

<sup>12</sup> Dorothy M Meads, 'An account of the Education of Women and girls in England at the time of the Tudors', Unpublished PhD Thesis, London, 1928.

denote the acquisition of basic literacy skills. The definition of female literacy should include the ability to read but not write, since the opportunities for girls' education were so limited.

Literacy has continued to be the subject of some controversy. The definition of literacy by David Cressy as the ability to sign a name, provided a helpful marker in the initial debate about literacy in England in the early modern period.<sup>13</sup> It has been challenged by several historians on the grounds that writing literacy was acquired last, and that many pupils, particularly girls, did not stay long enough at school to be taught to write.<sup>14</sup> There are also social reasons why a person able to write might not do so; a wife might choose not to sign if her husband made a mark. No very satisfactory conclusion to the debate has yet been reached. In a study of women's education the problem of quantifying literacy, already hampered by a lack of sources, is made more difficult because proof of reading literacy is elusive. Few women writing letters comment on the books they were reading, and there are only a few references to women being able to read print but not handwriting. The argument for a gendered definition of literacy will be examined in this thesis.

Dorothy Meads' thesis laid important groundwork for the study of women's education in the sixteenth century. It used wide-ranging sources, and took the search for literate women beyond the social group represented in collections of family papers, but its primarily descriptive framework left many questions unanswered. For example, although Meads' evidence pointed to increasing numbers of literate women, she did not seek to quantify and explain the increase, nor reach conclusions about the kinds of families which decided to educate their

---

<sup>13</sup> David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, Chapter 2.



daughters. The thesis continues to be of value to historians because of Meads' extensive work in the primary sources. She started to list document collections containing references to women, and discovered and then published the diary of Lady Margaret Hoby. This is, for the time being, a unique example of female writing from the sixteenth century, being a detailed account of how an intensely pious puritan wife of a Yorkshire gentleman spent her daily life.<sup>15</sup>

Building on this initial survey, Norma McMullen in a sound introductory essay based on printed sources, drew together existing research and analysis of the main issues raised by the prescriptive conduct books. She took two main exemplars from the seventeenth century who had written autobiographies to illustrate the realities. Her work recognised gender differences in defining education in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. McMullen concluded that the process of educating girls did not change over the period 1540-1640, but in the space of an article it was not possible to develop ideas. Her work needs to be extended and developed to test the conclusions further. It is important to examine manuscript sources to question the assumptions made about parental attitudes towards their daughters' education and to consider the evidence of the extent and levels of education among girls of the gentry classes.<sup>16</sup>

In three important articles, Kenneth Charlton extended the research and in an important new direction explored the educative role of mothers in the family.<sup>17</sup> He showed that the

---

<sup>15</sup> D M Meads, *Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby 1599-1605*, London, Routledge, 1930.

<sup>16</sup> Norma McMullen, The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640, *History of Education*, 1977, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp87-101.

<sup>17</sup> K Charlton, 'Tak thee to thi distaf...': the education of girls and women in early modern England, *Westminster Studies in Education*, Vol. 4, 1981, pp3-18. 'Not publicke onely but also private and domesticall': Mothers and familial education in pre-industrial England, *History of Education*, Spring 1988, pp1-20. Mothers as educative agents in pre-industrial England, *History of Education*, 1994, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp129-156.

experience of education for girls was heterogeneous. There was no agreement between the writers of conduct books on the detail of what girls should learn and some writers opposed girls' education entirely. Parents, while they almost universally planned marriage for their daughters, differed both in their specific aims for them and their ability to provide education. For example, some wanted their daughters to be able to read as well as write, others considered that it was sufficient to inculcate feminine norms of behaviour such as dutifulness and respect. In some families a musical education was an important part of the upbringing of girls. Charlton's detailed knowledge of conduct books, funeral sermons and printed collections of manuscripts enabled him to give a nuanced account of girls' education and contribute substantially to an understanding of women's roles (mainly within the Protestant gentry class) in the early modern period.

Charlton's most recent article, 'Mothers as educative agents in pre-industrial England', discussed one aspect of the role of women within the family which has been badly neglected until now: that is, the bringing up of children, including their education in its broadest sense and the supervision of servants. This is an important article, as it is one of very few concentrating on the mother herself rather than including her under the generic label 'parent'. The examples Charlton used show how actively many of the mothers were involved. While some of the tasks expected of a mother, such as teaching the children about religion, could have been carried out by illiterate women, most could not. Charlton's reliance on published sources has two drawbacks for a study of girls' education. Firstly, it limited the scope of his research and secondly, it precluded an examination of the manuscripts themselves to consider how far the signatory of the document was involved in its writing and thus giving evidence herself directly about her activities. The use of manuscript sources in the present research makes it possible to take the study

further and to examine the level of education of the women concerned through a study of their handwriting and to read their own words about what they were doing and their intentions. As the titles of the articles indicate, they covered two centuries and as Charlton himself admitted, the subject needs further research before any generalisations about girls' education can be made.

Parents decided for themselves whether a girl was to be educated or not and the amount of teaching she was given. This means that research on girls' education needs to be located in a study of the family, in order to examine the relationships and the attitudes expressed by parents on their aims for their daughters. It was within the family that girls received most of their education and the opportunity to exercise any educational skills learned. There continues to be controversy among historians about the interpretation of family structure in early-modern Europe.

Anderson in *Approaches to the History of the Western Family*, discussed the methodologies adopted by historians.<sup>18</sup> He described as the 'sentiments approach' the attempt to reveal attitudes and familial relationships from a reading of private letters and other personal documents. This method has also been described as ethnographic; it seeks to understand and explain familial relationships. The ethnographic method has been used for this study in order to consider both parental intentions for their daughters and how women used their literacy as adults. As a result, the emphasis of this study of education is on the literate classes; those able to write letters and maintain family archives. It will need a different kind of study to extend the knowledge of female literacy in any systematic way through other social groups, because of the lack of personal documents. Here, statistical analysis of court and church records may be more appropriate. As Anderson

---

<sup>18</sup> Michael Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914*, London, Macmillan, 1984.

explained, whatever methodology is chosen, there are inherent problems. It is important when deciding on the approach most suited to the research questions and sources, to ensure that the limitations of the method adopted are recognised and both method and sources are examined critically. The use of terminology which may have different meanings over time, means that it is important to locate symbolic ideas and concepts such as family, kinship and conjugal relationships in their context. The early modern historian has to be aware of the problems created by dealing with fragmentary information and the restricted social background of the sources when reaching conclusions.

The ethnographic method was used effectively by Ralph Houlbrooke and Alan Macfarlane in their studies of the family in early modern England. These were based on documentary sources as well as conduct books to compare theory with reality and to investigate the claims made by Lawrence Stone that in the landed classes there was an absence of affection and a failure to make emotional relationships either between spouses or parents and children.<sup>19</sup> Houlbrooke and Macfarlane found evidence of conjugal companionship in many families and substantially refuted Stone's arguments. They have themselves subsequently been criticised by Heal and Holmes for underestimating the incidence of marital disputes and overstating the case for conjugal harmony.<sup>20</sup> Their reliance on male sources for much of their analysis means that the role and importance of women in the family has been underestimated.

The decision to base this study on personal documents found mainly in gentry collections led to an initial survey of family histories of the gentry. Family biographies of the

---

<sup>19</sup> Ralph A Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700*, London, Longman, 1984. Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England 1300-1840*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, London, Penguin, 1977.

<sup>20</sup> Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700*, London, Macmillan, 1994.

gentry, have appeared since the middle of the nineteenth century. These like the biographies of women contemporary with them, tend to be narrative in form and as such of limited value to historians, except as indicators of collections of family papers and introductions to their contents. J T Cliffe's systematic studies of gentry families are invaluable aids to an understanding of the political and economic significance of the gentry, although women are largely omitted from the discussion. There have been other collective studies of the counties, such as Clark's study of Kent, for this period, which permit an understanding of the structure of county social and economic relationships.<sup>21</sup> Some important studies of individual families have been made, for example by Vivienne Larminie of the Newdigates, Jacqueline Eales of the Harleys and Miriam Slater of the Verneys. These studies examine the realities of family life, including a study of relationships within the nuclear family and kinship networks, setting the families in their social, economic and political context.<sup>22</sup> Gentry papers have been a hitherto under-utilised source by historians. Some collections are still not fully catalogued, but their value as a source for the social historian is increasingly being recognised.

The most recent study of the gentry, in 1994, by Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes has considerably extended our understanding of the political, economic and social role of gentry families in the early modern period.<sup>23</sup> They developed a clear and thorough analysis of the importance of the gentry, based on an

---

<sup>21</sup> J T Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*, London, Athlone Press, 1969; *The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families of Early Stuart England*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984. Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Politics and Society in Kent 1500-1640*, Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1977.

<sup>22</sup> Vivienne Larminie, *Marriage and the family: the example of the seventeenth century Newdigates*, *Midlands History* 9, 1984, pp1-22. Jacqueline Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads: the Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the outbreak of the English civil War*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990. Miriam Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: The Verneys of Claydon House*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

<sup>23</sup> Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, 1994.

extensive range of archival sources, covering most of England and Wales, and a study of the symbolism in funerary monuments and family portraits. The use of gender as an analytical tool permitted them to integrate women fully into the main body of the text and to discuss the roles of wife and mother. The ethnographic approach adopted by Heal and Holmes enabled them to draw meaningful conclusions relating to the role of women in the family, particularly in relation to the period from the third quarter of the sixteenth century for which they have most evidence. They are cautious about the extent of change in the structure of the family in the period they studied, going so far as to say that 'It seems less likely that core assumptions or relationships within the family were fundamentally altered.' At the same time they admit that...

it is perfectly possible to itemise a whole series of changes which did impinge on the experience of the gentry family under the Tudors and Stuarts. In no particular hierarchy of significance we might isolate greater mobility, especially that provided by the coach; access to London and other, later, centres of fashion; an expanding market in luxuries; literacy and cultural sophistication, particularly for women; humanist and Reformed ideas; and finally the establishment of the strict settlement and of more effective instruments of credit.<sup>24</sup>

Although Heal and Holmes admitted that there is no hierarchical significance in their listing of the changes affecting the family, the result is to underplay the importance of the acquisition of literacy by women and the resulting changes in conjugal relations. This is further considered in Chapter Three below. On the basis of their research into family papers, Heal and Holmes criticised historians for eulogising domestic harmony as a reaction to Stone's concept of a 'restricted patriarchal nuclear family' which lacked affection, and pointed out the number of severe marital difficulties which appeared in public, if not in the

---

<sup>24</sup> Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, 1994, pp95-96.

courts. At the same time they point to raised expectations of domestic harmony and companionship in marriage. Heal and Holmes found greater evidence of friendship and affection between spouses in correspondence by the beginning of the seventeenth century compared with 100 years earlier, yet at the same time emphasised that there were no fundamental changes in the relationship between husband and wife since the beginning of the sixteenth century. This conclusion that for the gentry, within an intrinsically patriarchal marriage structure, the relationship between husband and wife altered and became more companionable, is worth more careful consideration particularly from the female view-point. The evidence from gentry papers used by Heal and Holmes in their study, shows that there were indeed a number of stormy and difficult marriages. With an extended reading of family letters and other personal documents this hypothesis can be further tested.

Since marriage negotiations were so significant to the well-being or even survival of a family, an important consideration for parents bringing up daughters was that they should conform to the expectations of future marriage partners. Sons were brought up to expect that a wife would be deferential and a way had to be found by which an educated girl would still be obedient and respectful. In 'Teach her to live under obedience': the making of women in the upper ranks of early modern England', Linda Pollock examined the aims of parents in maintaining the position of the family, and showed how this was closely reflected in the upbringing of their children, particularly their daughters.<sup>25</sup> She explored the nature of the paradox between the restricted codes of conduct of the prescriptive literature and the permissive reality (albeit limited) for adult women and suggested reasons why this had come about.

---

<sup>25</sup> Linda Pollock, 'Teach her to live under obedience': the making of women in the upper ranks of early modern England, *Continuity and Change*, 4(2) 1989, pp231-258.

In Pollock's view, manuscript sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries support the idea that 'girls were permitted to exercise their wills as children' but that strenuous efforts were made to inculcate deference and obedience as they matured and became marriageable. She showed clearly the importance of training in submissiveness and how parents constantly reinforced the desired behavioural norms. Girls were brought up to be able to complete the tasks they would be expected to perform as wives: in the case of the families she studied, these included the supervision of estates in the absence of the husband. Nevertheless, a wife should never compete with her husband: the combination of a restricted education and instilled habits of deference should prevent this from happening. There is much in the article which is supported by the evidence, particularly with respect to the seventeenth century, but some claims, for example that some parents considered that Latin could be useful for employment prospects and that 'outside the rarefied world of higher learning women did not perceive themselves to be inadequate' need further evidence before they can be supported.<sup>26</sup> The article made a substantial contribution to developing a methodology for studying girls' education and she demonstrated the significance of gender in child-rearing practice. Pollock showed, for example, how girls were carefully trained to be competent and self-reliant, but obedient and deferent to their husbands at the same time. Girls' studies were carefully structured by their parents to produce the desired effect.

While Pollock's study contributes to a greater understanding of the female role in the family by concentrating on the upbringing of girls, nevertheless, it remains the case that in most of the studies of the family so far written, the voices of women are under-represented. Even Linda Pollock had more to say about fathers' aims for their daughters than about their

---

<sup>26</sup> Linda Pollock, 1989, pp241 and 250.



mothers'. Unless women's manuscripts are used more frequently, the term 'parent' will remain synonymous with 'father'. It is important to examine personal documents from women to establish how far mothers' views coincided with fathers', before any definition of the role of mothers can be made.

Much of the impetus for research into the status and mental world of early modern women has come from literary historians and women's studies specialists. Many of the writers were more interested in literary women and the image of women as it appears in contemporary literature than in the reality of women's lives. The practical difficulties of carrying out research in manuscripts and the application of different, non-historical literary skills have resulted in a series of studies which deal with theory rather than practice. The main purpose of Linda Woodbridge in *Women and the English Renaissance*, was to understand attitudes to women as they are portrayed in literature, and she brought together a reading of the prescriptive conduct books and literary texts. While asserting that there is a connection between female literary figures and reality, she made a distinction between the literary and the real world and saw that it was essential to maintain it. 'We must be clearer in our own minds than we have been so far that life and literature are not the same.'<sup>27</sup> The present study of the realities of women's lives will enable literary historians to validate their comparisons between fictional women and their real counterparts.

It has already been shown that the educational experience of girls in the sixteenth century was diverse, so it is important to examine the influences on parents making decisions about their daughters' education. Some research has already been carried out in significant related areas. Several historians have examined the influence of humanism in the sixteenth century on attitudes towards women. Renaissance scholars such

---

<sup>27</sup> Woodbridge L, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womanhood 1540-1620*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1984, p7.

as Castiglione, Vives and others in the early part of the century, argued for a classically educated gentleman able to serve the state and fulfil his obligations. The question was whether women of the same class were to be regarded as having similar capabilities and obligations, or treated differently. In *Doctrine of the Lady of the Renaissance*, Ruth Kelso adopted a European perspective for her subject. She examined the influence of humanism and analysed the status of women within marriage and the extent to which education was an integral part of the upbringing of aristocratic girls. Ruth Kelso concluded that even humanist scholars regarded women as intellectually inferior to men and thus their education was to be more limited than boys' and their reading matter more carefully controlled. Nevertheless, humanist ideals did have a direct impact on the upbringing of girls in a few families in England and led to some of them receiving a classical education in the early sixteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

In her study of humanism in the reign of Henry VIII, Maria Dowling considered the impact of the new learning on attitudes to education in the early sixteenth century in England, and the effect on men and women. Using both the prescriptive advice books and documentary evidence, she showed how far support for the notion of educating girls in the classics had spread by the 1540s. Even among court circles she found considerable variation in the standards achieved. While some women, including the royal princesses were able to write or even speak Latin, others, such as Katherine Howard were much less well taught. From such small numbers, Maria Dowling concluded that it would be unwise to make any generalisations about attitudes to girls' education even among aristocratic families: 'Learned women were applauded as much for their rarity as for their personal excellence, and their education did not give them egress into public life.'<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Kelso Ruth, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1958.

<sup>29</sup> Maria Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII*, London, Croom Helm, 1986, p242.

Refinements of the definition of the 'public sphere' have led to some modifications of this exclusion of women from public life. Barbara Harris in her article 'Women and Politics in Early Tudor England' drew attention to the role of women in developing political influence for their families, arranging marriages of significance, raising the children of others in their homes, distributing patronage and seeking favours in the period before 1550.<sup>30</sup> In this article Harris demonstrated the importance of looking outside the formal political structure of institutions such as Parliament and the Privy Council in order to understand how power was exercised and how the distribution of financial rewards, privileges and offices took place. She emphasised, that for a full appreciation of the political life of the early Tudor period, the historian needs to take into account the way patronage functioned broadly on two levels: at the centre of politics at Court, and, at a regional level, in the great households. Harris showed that women participated in political life in this wider sense, although it would be wrong to expect the same frequency of involvement as for men.

Although most classically educated women were to be found in Court circles, there was a small number of educated women in England from the 1530s, able to make translations, correspond with Erasmus and impress other contemporary writers. They are easily identifiable and their learning was equal to that of the best educated men in the country. This group includes families such as the Cookes of Gidea Hall, Essex, where all four daughters were remarkable for their achievements, and the family of Sir Thomas More whose daughter, Margaret Roper, translated Erasmus' *Devout Treatise upon the Pater Noster*. Her daughter, Mary, in turn was well educated and translated her mother's Latin version of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Barbara Harris, 'Women and Politics in Early Tudor England', *The Historical Journal*, 33, 2 (1990) pp 259-81.

<sup>31</sup> The learning of the Cooke daughters, both Margaret Roper and her daughter Mary is described in George Ballard, *Memoirs of several Ladies of Great Britain, who have been celebrated for their*

These were exceptional women and the sample is far too narrow to allow any generalised conclusions from their experience. However several writers on women's education have fallen into this trap. For example, Retha Warnicke in her introduction to *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation*, explained the purpose of her book which was to analyse 'the English acceptance of classical training for women.' Initially she was cautious and wrote that 'it is unreasonable to suggest that, because it had several learned women, Tudor society as a whole encouraged its gentlewomen to become well-educated', and she acknowledged that 'the accomplishments of the women humanists and reformers took place against a backdrop of stark illiteracy for most of their female contemporaries.'<sup>32</sup> Her conclusions, however, went further than is justified by her limited sample. In an attempt to impose a structure on her analysis of the classical education of girls in the sixteenth century, she divided women into generations. The intention was to compare the education they received, with the classically educated generation of the More and Cooke daughters in the 1530s. The model constrained the writer firstly, to draw conclusions based on named women, who as she pointed out earlier, do not represent women of the English Renaissance and Reformation in general, and secondly, to divide the time-period artificially into generations. The question of how far these women were representative even of the aristocracy needs to be re-considered. In an otherwise useful and interesting survey, which does extend the list of women known to have been educated classically and gives weight to the educational achievements of Catholic women, Warnicke's tendency to construct or accept theories based on limited evidence made the book less valuable. As Dorothy Meads recognised many years earlier, in her 1928 thesis, it is important to go beyond the few listed women educated in Latin.

---

writings or skill in the learned languages, arts and sciences, ed. Ruth Perry, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1985.

<sup>32</sup> Retha Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation*, Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1983. pp3 and 4.

Studies of the best-educated, literary women of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries have already been carried out. Some women wrote texts mainly in English which were subsequently published.<sup>33</sup> These were considered in *'Silent but for the Word'; Tudor Women as patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works*, a collection of essays edited by Margaret Hannay. Hannay concentrated on literary women and their output; the essays set the works in context and studied the influences on their literary style.<sup>34</sup> The high level of literacy of the women authors featured in this book was rare in the early modern period, but the book provides an indication of the standard of writing a few women could achieve.

As a means of arriving at a greater understanding of the mental world of women, historians are recognising the importance of using a variety of sources. Increasingly, historians (as Heal and Holmes and Wilson did with funerary monuments) are turning to an interpretation of symbolism in portraits as a means of understanding the sitter. In portraits as in literature, educated Elizabethans loved symbolism and allegories; they commissioned works to establish their position in the world for themselves and posterity.<sup>35</sup> The portraits of the Queen herself contain elaborate statements about her personal qualities; many are carefully constructed political statements designed to impress her countrymen and foreign powers. In *"From Myself, My Other Self I Turned": An Introduction*, S P Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies interpreted images of the Queen and their political significance.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> See Suzanne Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640*, San Marino, Huntington Library, 1982.

<sup>34</sup> Margaret P Hannay, *Silent but for the Word*, Kent, Kent State University Press, 1985.

<sup>35</sup> See for example, Roy Strong, *The English Icon: Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraiture*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.

<sup>36</sup> eds., S P Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies, *Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private in the English Renaissance*, Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992.

Similar analytical techniques can be applied to representations of women from other social levels. Elizabeth had a unique public role as Queen: the lives of other women were much more circumscribed, but substantial numbers of portraits from landed families still exist. On one level, they indicate the wealth and status of the family behind the sitter, on another they contain clues about the character of the sitter herself. Many of these contain symbolic items appropriate to the more limited world of the household, chosen to represent particular personal qualities important to the family commissioning the portrait: for example a pet, a flower, a fan, a jewel, and significantly for a study of education, a book. The existence of such portraits may represent in the family commissioning the painting, an interest in displaying the learning or expressing the piety of the woman concerned. By examining the family context of the portrait, the intention behind the commission may become clearer.

Merry E Wiesner in her recent book, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, provided an overarching survey drawing together the most recent research on women's lives. Her chapter on literacy and learning concentrated on learned women and the social elites. She drew on her own research in German records for an account of basic education. The chapter is particularly useful for setting the education of English girls in an international context and for making comparisons between the Catholic and Protestant experience at the highest social levels. She saw strong similarities between Protestant and Catholic marriage treatises, confirming the notion of continuity of advice during the sixteenth century. Wiesner was discerning in her analysis of the influence of gender-specific distinctions, such as between the masculine art and science and the feminine craft. She showed how this was instrumental in excluding women from learned culture and formal institutions and restricted their opportunities for self

expression.<sup>37</sup>

In conclusion, therefore, recent published research has begun to develop methodologies appropriate to the study of women's history which has permitted substantial progress in the search for a greater understanding of the mental world of women in the early modern period. At the same time a more detailed knowledge of the manuscript collections of the period has shown how much information is available once research is extended in a systematic way. Nevertheless the study of women in the early modern period is still in its early stages and there are many questions yet to be answered. Education is central to an understanding of women's roles. It was a key element in girls' upbringing, providing the skills they needed to function more effectively as wives and mothers. At the same time, education enabled women to extend their activities and assume a more prominent role in family affairs.

### Primary Sources

#### Letters

The main sources used in the study were private papers, mainly correspondence, held in collections of family papers. The purpose was to attempt to reconstruct the realities of family life for women from personal letters. The letters were read for information regarding the upbringing of daughters with particular reference to their education and the roles that women played as adults both in the family and the public sphere outside. A reading of the extensive prescriptive literature of the sixteenth century giving advice to householders and parents, showed the importance placed by contemporaries on the educative function of the family. This importance is reflected in some of the views expressed in

---

<sup>37</sup> Merry E Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

contemporary correspondence. At the same time, the personal correspondence demonstrated that women were far more active than the conduct books advised and there were significant discrepancies between the theory of the conduct books and realities of family life. For example, some women were effective managers of estate business able to act on their own when required; others were expected to take a central part in the upbringing and education of children, and were literate and confident in their own judgements. A few studies by historians of women have already drawn attention to these differences but they need further examination and explanation.<sup>38</sup>

The conduct books, with their heavy emphasis on the woman as the quiet supporter or helpmeet of her husband with a role limited to supervising the household, left little room for individual initiative or responsibility. Most of the prescriptive writers did favour literacy, but overall the views of the conduct books implied a rather different upbringing, specifying, as Linda Pollock showed, training in the development of feminine qualities of submissiveness and obedience.

An extensive search was made for documents from women themselves which would illustrate their roles as daughters, wives and mothers, to see how far the preliminary impressions of literate women active in many spheres of family life were representative of other women of the gentry class. The survey of women's letters noted particularly references to the quality of relationships between members of the family, and considered internal evidence from the documents of the level of educational standards reached by the writers. Twenty four archive offices were visited or approached in order to ascertain their holdings of family papers containing letters from women of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

---

<sup>38</sup> See for example Alison Wall, *Elizabethan Precept and Feminine Practice: The Thynne Family of Longleat, History*, Vol. 75, 1990, pp23-38.



From these, appropriate collections of documents were located in 15 centres. Care was taken to achieve a geographical spread of families and to include documents from both Catholics and Protestants. The persecution of active Catholics, resulting in some cases in the loss of estates and the dispersal of children for education abroad, made the survival of personal documents from Catholic women a particular problem. Among the families whose collections were studied, were two with substantial numbers of Catholics; the Throckmortons and the Kytsons. In addition there are two other groups of Catholic sources which are significant. Firstly, some records from the religious houses established by English women, mainly in Flanders and northern France, from 1598 onwards have survived. They contain in many cases information about the education received by the girls, both before they entered the convents and after they professed their vows. In a number of cases the records have been printed by the Catholic Record Society. Secondly, some personal papers have survived and are located in archives such as the Westminster Diocesan Archives.<sup>39</sup>

A study in depth of a short period of time, such as the present research, made it possible to overcome some of the problems of covering a long time-span; to begin to develop a more precise conceptual framework and to locate enough evidence to contextualise examples. Where possible, other sources such as wills and guild records were consulted in order to extend the social background of the research sample beyond the gentry class from which most of the evidence is taken. The experience of family life, even within a social group like the gentry, was diverse; outside it, economic differences increased that diversity. For example, in peasant farming communities or in the case of shopkeepers and artisans in towns, women were an integral part of the economic function

---

<sup>39</sup> See for example, Abbess Neville's Annals of five communities of English Benedictine nuns in Flanders 1598-1687, Misc. VI 1909; Records of the Abbey of our Lady of Consolation at Cambrai, 1620-1793, Misc. VIII 1913; Records of the English Benedictine Nuns, Cambrai (Stanbrook), 1620-1793, Misc. XIII 1917, all Catholic Record Society. Westminster Diocesan Archives, Records of the Catholic Chapter, AAW./A Vols. V, VI-VIII.

of the household and their labour was needed for its daily survival. The problem for historians is that so few of these groups left letters or other personal writings, that it is difficult to gain more than fragmentary information about their lives.

In order to limit the period covered by the research, examples were chosen from women who were alive after the accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1558 and those who were born between 1558 and 1610. In a very few cases, a woman born in the second decade of the seventeenth century has been included for reasons which are explained in the text. For the purpose of comparing the writing habits of girls, correspondence was listed by decade. Very few letters were found in the collections studied for the period before 1550. Sample readings of other collections indicated a similar lack of letters from the early sixteenth century. By contrast, the situation for the early seventeenth century shows a very substantial increase in the number of surviving letters from women. While it is important to recognise the limitations of this kind of analysis, (as noted below) nevertheless the results are an indication of the changing role of women over the course of the century. The reasons for these changes will be examined in this thesis.

#### Table 1: Distribution of letters by decade

Notes on table 1.

The figures given relate to letters from women who signed or wrote their own letters in the collections seen in the course of this research. The sample was taken from collections where manuscript holdings were comprehensive on one site. Letters from women in collections where there were fewer than 15 relevant documents or serious problems of dating have not been included. As far as possible, undated letters have been allocated to a decade, otherwise they were placed in the undated columns. It has to be recognised that there are so many elements of chance in the survival of private papers that no significance should be read into the absence of letters for a particular decade in any single family. For example no letters for the Countess of Bath and the Kytson family at Hengrave are listed for 1600s and 1630s, although there are a

number of letters for the decades before and after.

Collection	Before 1530	1530-9	1590-9	1600-9	1610-9	1620-9	1630-9	Undated before 1600	Undated post 1600 before 1640
Barrington						11	16		
Clifton						0	27	2	4
Clenennau			0	5	2	2	0	4	8
Coke			1	6	12	11	29		15
Hengrave	43	1	4	0	2	9	0		
Herrick	1	9	9	0	9	4	1		
Knyvet/Paston/ Gawdy	2	3	3	12	12	65	24	3	72
Smyth			0	0	1	34	36		
Trevor			0	0	0	32	33		
Wynn	1	0	0	15	8	12	12		
Totals	47	13	17	38	46	180	178	9	99

The table illustrates the broad trends in women's letter-writing practice between 1550 and 1640 in a group of 13 gentry families. It shows the steady increase in numbers of letters being written by women in the period up to 1620, with a dramatic increase thereafter. Taken with other evidence, it is both an indicator of the levels of female literacy of the period and evidence of increasing involvement by women of the landed classes in correspondence about family matters.

The personal documents studied come from a social group which, although numerically small, was both powerful and influential. Landed families controlled political patronage and informal networks which spread widely over the country. They exercised authority at the local level as Justices of the Peace and at the centre as officials at Court or in Parliament. Wealth and status was measured in land. This encouraged those families who made money from trade or from the professions to raise their status either through the purchase of land or through

arranging advantageous marriages with landed families. Many of the gentry were connected with the aristocracy either by birth or marriage and sought patronage through them. The correspondence surveyed, shows that women acted as important links and intermediaries seeking to secure favourable decisions for the family through their influential relatives.

The documents written by women in these collections of papers fell into two main categories; firstly letters and secondly, other personal documents including advice and memoirs. By far the largest group consisted of letters, mainly from women written to other members of the kin network. Where possible, men's letters to other members of the family and particularly to their wives were read, to see how far they supported the conclusions derived from the women's letters. Most women in the study are represented at the most, by a short series of letters or single items. Lady Brilliana Harley and Frances, Countess of Exeter were exceptional because so many of their letters still exist. In the case of Brilliana Harley over 200 and for the Countess of Exeter over 85.<sup>40</sup>

Women's letters were noted if they were written or signed by them, but not if they were written and signed by a secretary on their behalf and there was no evidence of a mark that they had made on the paper. In many cases the ink used by a woman signing a letter was the same as that used by the secretary. This suggests that she signed at or around the same time as the letter was written and could be taken to have participated in deciding the contents. If there is no evidence of direct involvement, it is possible that a broad statement about the contents of a letter could have been made to the secretary, who then followed convention or his own policy about the detail of the letter. The sender might have had little control over the final contents. The handwriting of the letter was noted for the form of the script. Three broad categories were

---

<sup>40</sup> Brilliana Harley's unpublished letters are mainly located in B L Add MSS 70,003-4, 70,110 and Frances Countess of Exeter in CKS, Sackville Papers, U269/1 CP42/1-2.

devised for analytical purposes; secretary hand, italic and cursive. Within each group there were considerable variations in style and competence. It was clear that some letters had been written with confidence, whereas others were hesitant and showed lack of writing experience. Because of the difficulty of defining correct orthography in this period, spelling was only noted when it was particularly extraordinary.

Twenty collections of personal correspondence where there were more than 15 letters signed or written by women were analysed in detail under two main headings: family experience, such as the death of a parent, educational experience and family relationships, such as affection between husband and wife. The results appear as Table Two, page 35. They represent a range of experiences within the ranks of the gentry. Two of them, the Smyths of Ashton Court near Bristol, and the Herricks of Leicester rose from the ranks of the merchants over several generations in the sixteenth century, bought land and made marriage agreements with established families by the turn of the seventeenth century. The correspondence in some families, most notably the Cliftons from Nottinghamshire, showed that they were much more closely involved with the aristocracy than others such as the Barringtons of Hertfordshire and Essex. It is possible to make comparisons between Catholic and Protestant experience of family life. Two families, the Throckmortons of Coughton in Warwickshire and Kytsons at Hengrave in Suffolk were Catholic throughout the period. A few Catholic recusants were found in other families in the late sixteenth century, although later members of the family conformed. A comparison between Catholic and Protestant correspondence shows families experiencing similar relationships and difficulties with them.

The geographical area represented covers England from Yorkshire in the North to Sussex in the South, from North Wales and Bristol in the West to East Anglia in the East. Some families held land across several regions, for example the

Trevor correspondence network links Anglesey, Cheshire, London and Sussex. These extensive connections are found in most of the families either in the landholdings seen above or in the marriage negotiations. Most families in the study had at least one contact in London able to conduct business on their behalf, make purchases or make arrangements for the young people of the house. The existence of such links suggest that regional variations in attitudes and mores at this social level were being eroded in the late sixteenth century.

No attempt was made to estimate the wealth of the families concerned, as no evidence was found in the course of the research linking the decision to educate daughters with the size of the family fortune among the gentry: all the families in the gentry group were able to afford some teaching for their daughters.

The table indicates the main interests of the women as expressed in their letters. Most of the letters were written by women within the extended kin network; an indication of the importance of women in maintaining family relationships. The personal nature of the majority of the letters meant that much of the information contained related to the family. The writers passed on news or made arrangements relating to different members of the family. The table shows how widespread were certain experiences: for example, in most of the families the death of a parent and re-marriage, the boarding out of children and arrangements for the marriage of young people. The letters, significantly, illustrate the marital relationship, the involvement of women in estate business and the continuing interest of mothers in the lives of their adult children. In most cases, there was evidence of companionship, affection and shared interests between married couples and grandmothers played an important part in the lives of their grandchildren. The evidence of girls' education comes mainly from the existence of letters from them, rather than from discussions in letters or arrangements for teaching them.

Table 2: Analysis of the contents of women’s letters for interests and relationships

[illegible]

### Personal Writings

The second group of sources were longer personal writings such as the memoirs of Grace Mildmay, the Commonplace Book of Lady Brilliana Harley and the notebook of advice she wrote for her son. These writings are evidence not only of women's ability to write extended explanations of their beliefs, but also indicate the sources of their ideas in the books they read.<sup>41</sup>

### Exercise Books

A significant source for a study of girls' education in the early modern period was found: a collection of exercise books written by Rachael Fane, who was being taught during the 1620s at Knole in Kent. Her grandmother was Grace Mildmay whose memoirs were noted above. Within one family, it is possible to trace three generations of women within one family, who were each given a very thorough education. This is an important find because they are very early examples of girls' exercise books.<sup>42</sup>

### Accounts

Within family papers, accounts sometimes contain details of payments to tutors or governesses, the cost of books or items of music and musical instruments. Accounts are often fragmentary but they do indicate households where the education of children was being arranged and can show women acting as household managers when the books were signed or entries made by them. Too little information was found to be able to draw any conclusions about women's numeracy.

---

<sup>41</sup> These writings of Grace Lady Mildmay are described as Meditations and are held in the Central Library, Northampton. Brilliana Conway (Harley)'s Commonplace Book is held at Nottingham University Library, Portland London MSS Pl Fm 5; Lady Brilliana Harley's advice for her son Edward, B L Add MS 70,118, undated and unfoliated.

<sup>42</sup> Rachael Fane's Notebooks, 15 items in CKS, U269 F 38/1, 1623-33.



### Advice Books

Most advice books were written by men, although several, most notably in this period Thomas Bentley's *Monument of Matrones*, 1582, were intended for women. Indeed Bentley included some women's writing in his work. In a study of girls' education and mothers' attitudes, five published books of advice written by women are significant.<sup>43</sup> Four of these were dedicated to daughters and give spiritual and moral advice on how to lead the good life and show how mothers thought their daughters ought to behave. The Countess of Lincoln included general advice along with information on breast-feeding. Grace Sherrington, Lady Mildmay and Brilliana Harley also wrote for a similar purpose although their advice was never published.

### Wills

Wills are an important source of information for a study of education in the early modern period. They can indicate the literacy of testators, their intentions for their children, if they have any, and the bequest of books is a sign that the books are important to both the donor and recipient. Books are seldom mentioned and their inclusion can be taken as a measure of their perceived significance. Wills also take the study of education beyond the landed classes to poorer groups of people; as such they can provide some background on those on the fringes of landed society, for example, yeomen who did not own their own land but, who, in many cases were as well-off as the poorer gentry. Few of the poorest groups made wills. F G Emmison's extensive printing of Elizabethan wills from Essex make it possible to cover a large area in the search for information about parental intentions. Other counties need to be covered to permit comparative studies to be made.

---

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Grymeston, *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives*, 1604; Elizabeth Joceline, *The mothers legacie to her unborn childe*, 1624; Dorothy Leigh, *The mothers blessing*, 1627; Elizabeth Richardson, *A ladies legacie to her daughters in 3 books*, 1645; Elizabeth Clinton, Countess of Lincoln, *The Countesse of Lincoln's Nursurie*, 1622.

## Portraits

Portraiture, used with caution, can be an indication of interest in learning in the wealthier families. Given the care with which symbols were chosen for portraits, the presence of a book is a significant indicator of the sitter's interest in it. What is not clear, unless written evidence can be found, is whether the sitter was interested in the contents of the book; or whether the importance of the book is its significance as an object of monetary value. The interpretation is complex; for example a prayer-book could be an indication of piety as well as an indication that the owner could read it. If the binding of the book on display is expensive or rare, it might be an indication of wealth or the recognition of a significant gift. Other clues in the portrait or family papers can assist in reaching conclusions regarding interpretations. It is worth considering the symbolism of the portraits and the funerary monuments of the period for a greater understanding of family relationships and attitudes to women.<sup>44</sup>

The range of sources for a study of girls education means that the subject can be approached from a number of vantage points. The lack of personal documents, it has to be acknowledged, is frustrating at times, but viewed positively it encourages the investigation of alternative sources. It is possible to begin to find answers to the questions regarding girls' education in the early modern period that were raised at the beginning of this chapter, at least as far as the aristocracy and gentry are concerned. As more research is carried out it becomes clear that in spite of the recommendations of the conduct books, women did operate in the public sphere outside the household. For example, they had networks of contacts through which requests could be channelled and they had their own correspondence with religious reformers, sometimes

---

<sup>44</sup> For the significance of funerary monuments see Heal and Holmes, 1994, particularly Chapter Two. See also, Jean Wilson, 'Icons of Unity', *History Today*, June 1993, pp14-20.

contradicting the views of their husbands. A few women earned money on their own account. This thesis will examine the evidence to try and determine the part played by education in facilitating such activity both in the household and outside. There is evidence of greater interest in educating girls over the course of the sixteenth century. This was expressed in letters and can be seen in the increased number of letters and other documents written by women by the end of the century. Why did this happen in the sixteenth century? The experience of girls and women in Catholic and Protestant families will be compared to consider the question of whether there was a distinctive family type and attitude towards girls' education pertaining to each religious denomination.

### Terminology

The complexity of the patterns of lived experience of family life in the early modern period makes it important to define terms.<sup>45</sup> In this study the term 'household' includes servants and young people as well as the conjugal family and co-resident near relatives. The size of the household varied considerably according to wealth, social position and stage in family development in this period: the death of husband or wife at the centre might alter the household considerably. Even relatively poor families might have one servant living-in whereas at the highest social level, there were times when 100 people lived in the Burghley household. The practice, seen in most social classes, of sending young people to spend time in another family as boarders rather than servants, in order to acquire skills, make connections and learn self-discipline, adds to the complexity of describing households. At the heart of the household was the conjugal or nuclear family; parents and children with the father as head. The size and generational pattern found in the families studied in the course of this research varied considerably and the term

---

<sup>45</sup> For an overview of interpretations of family structure in the early modern period see Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Familial Relationships, 1500-1900*, London, Macmillan, 1994.

family may include near blood relations.<sup>46</sup> In some families, such as the Smyths at Ashton Court, widows continued in the family home after the death of their husband, sometimes for a considerable period to help bring up grandchildren. Among the Hengrave papers are a number of letters between women of different generations. Gwydir in North Wales was one of the houses where a young couple started married life in the parental home.<sup>47</sup>

The term 'extended family' is used to describe the kin network not living in the same place. As table 2 shows, many of the letters read during the course of this research were sent by women to other members of the extended family, an indication of its importance to them. Kinship ties were often invoked in times of crisis; for example to ask for financial assistance, to act as intermediary in a lawsuit, support in a dispute, or help in seeking office to secure influence in public life. Women played a significant part in these networks, maintaining the connections in the long term, so that goodwill could be called upon when it was needed. They wrote letters inviting people to stay, passing on good wishes, sending tokens of affection and securing influential godparents before christenings. The possibility of linking into kinship networks likely to be of some value was an important consideration when arranging marriages. The discussion in the following chapters will illustrate further the roles that women played in maintaining and developing these important contacts.

### Notes on transcription

Where manuscript sources are given, the spelling is as the original with the following exceptions: the modern use of i and j, u and v, c and t have been adopted, ye has been

---

<sup>46</sup> See Table 2, p35.

<sup>47</sup> See Table 1, p31, for details.

transcribed as the. Punctuation has been added where the meaning would otherwise be in doubt. [] indicate editorial comments or a supplied letter or word, or are left blank in the case of missing or illegible text. Dates are given new style with January 1 taken as the start of the new year.

## CHAPTER TWO

EDUCATING DAUGHTERS: PRESCRIPTIVE ADVICE, PARENTAL ATTITUDES  
AND PRACTICE

Among contemporaries there was widespread agreement on the importance of the family in the maintenance of Christian standards and civic virtues. If society was to be stable, family life had to be ordered and structured in conformity with the norms of the dominant culture; the monarchy and all that it represented and the Anglican Church. This emphasis on order and conformity is to be found in Catholic families also.<sup>1</sup> The family was 'the first societie in nature and the ground of all the rest' according to William Perkins, one of the most prolific writers and preachers of the late sixteenth century. He believed that 'the holie and righteous government thereof, is a direct meane for the good ordering, both of Church and Common-wealth... This first societie, is as it were the Schoole, wherein are taught and learned the principles of authoritie and subjection...' It was, he argued, essential to make sure that family life followed these principles. Perkins, typical of many writers of conduct books and catechisms for householders, gave detailed advice on how this was to be achieved.<sup>2</sup> Clearly if the family was important, the behaviour of the different members should be regulated by the head of the family to ensure conformity. Part of that regulation was a planned upbringing for daughters who would bring credit to the family by marrying well and securing the future by producing the next generation. As mothers they would be responsible for the transmission of acceptable moral standards and beliefs to their children.

---

<sup>1</sup> Marie Rowlands, *Recusant Women 1560-1640* in ed. Mary Prior, *Women in English Society 1500-1800*, London, Methuen, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 1609, Epistle dedicatorie 2v and 3r & v.

This chapter will give an overview of the opinions expressed in the prescriptive literature on the upbringing and training of daughters. It will examine attitudes to girls' education in practice based on two main groups of sources: firstly the intentions of parents expressed in a sample of Elizabethan wills, mainly from Essex, and secondly in personal documents in order to compare the parents' intentions with the attitudes of the prescriptive literature. From this it is possible to reach a greater understanding of the concept 'education' as it was applied to girls in the late sixteenth century. The influence of external factors on parents making decisions about their daughters' education in the same period will be examined. Finally, the chapter will examine the evidence available regarding the location of girls' education. The levels of education achieved by girls based on personal documents will be considered in Chapter Five.

### The prescriptive view of girls' education

Much of the advice given in the conduct books in the sixteenth century about the regulation of family life, dealt with the duties and responsibilities of parents to their children. The number of such books is an indication of the importance of children to sixteenth-century parents and their concern to bring them up well. Where conduct books made gender distinctions about the upbringing of children, they were clear about desirable feminine characteristics to be cultivated by parents. Daughters, it was universally agreed, should be brought up to be modest, chaste, respectful and obedient. When young, they should recognise the authority of their parents and after marriage that of their husbands.<sup>3</sup> This character

---

<sup>3</sup> For secondary work on this subject see, for example, Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1956. K Charlton, *Education in Renaissance England*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965, p205. Norma McMullen, *The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640*, *History of Education*, 1977 (VI) pp87-91. D'arne Welch, *Sixteenth Century Humanism and the Education of Women*, *Paedagogica Historica*, Vol. 24 No. 1, 1984, pp241-256. Mary Ellen Lamb, *Cooke Sisters: Attitudes toward Learned Women*, in M P Hannay ed., *Silent but for the Word*, Ohio, Kent State University Press, 1985.

formation was at the heart of all advice in the period on the bringing up of daughters. Thomas Becon asked rhetorically in 1543:

Can anything be more necessary or godly in a christian commonweal, than to bring up maids and young women virtuously, and to teach them "to be sober-minded, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, housewifely, good, obedient to their husbands?"<sup>4</sup>

Throughout all the conduct books of the sixteenth century appearing in English, similar phrases describing the ideal feminine character are to be found, but they differed on the extent to which they supported the teaching of girls.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century Catholic humanist reformers like Erasmus encouraged people (men and women) to learn to read and to this end published many of his works in the vernacular. Erasmus wrote in the preface to his translation of the New Testament in 1516, that it was desirable 'for the uneducated to read the simple truths of scripture in their own language.'<sup>5</sup> In order to be critical, it was essential for Christians to read for themselves, rather than listen to the words and interpretation of others. By developing an understanding of the scriptures and a full knowledge of the Christian faith, both men and women could become active Christians. Erasmus argued that educated parents would be better able to bring up their children according to spiritual guidelines laid down in scripture and by church authorities. He made a specific point of advocating the education of girls, so that they could study and reach a higher standard of motherhood, develop a more companionable relationship with their husbands and be active Christians

---

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Becon, *Catechism*, 1844 ed., p376.

<sup>5</sup> Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991, p142.



themselves.<sup>6</sup> His books appealed to readers from widely differing backgrounds. Works such as his translation of the New Testament, which set new standards of critical scholarship, and his satirical essay *The praise of folly*, were aimed at the educated elites. However, once translated, their readership was extended, and the style appealed to anyone able to read the vernacular. Amongst his writings were homely, informal versions of Platonic dialogue designed to give advice on domestic matters.<sup>7</sup>

The ideas of Catholic reformers like Erasmus regarding the upbringing of children were continued by Protestant thinkers of the Reformation. For example, in the 1520s and 1530s Martin Luther emphasised the importance of reading scripture in order to participate fully in religious life. This resulted in the establishment of local schools for boys and girls in many parts of Germany, and the publication of appropriate texts such as Catechisms and Primers. Although Luther has been given much credit by historians for popularising active involvement in Christianity, Euan Cameron suggested that he was more elitist than Erasmus.<sup>8</sup> Luther considered that the Bible should only be read and interpreted by those with scholarly skills which could be acquired as a result of special training. Later reformers developed these ideas further: for example, Bullinger published a sermon in 1549, saying that the unskilled and unlearned needed a minister to expound the scriptures and teach them. The commitment of Luther and the Protestant reformers whose work was published in England to encouraging active Christianity, reinforced the message already propounded by Erasmus. The Protestant Reformation in

---

<sup>6</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *A ryght frutefull epystle... in laude and prayse of matrimony*, tr. by R Tavernour. 1536. Maria Dowling in Chapter 7 of *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII*, London, Croom Helm, 1986, discussed the impact of the new learning on women concentrating on the elitist erudition at court but at the same time showing its importance in encouraging piety and morality among women.

<sup>7</sup> For further discussion of the advice on marriage, see Chapter Three below.

<sup>8</sup> Euan Cameron, 1991, pp143-4.

England led to the publication of more works which supported the concept of expanding the educational opportunities available to children, both boys and girls.

The importance of the role of parents in ensuring that their children should learn at least to read, was widely recognised by the conduct books. The main aim of parents bringing up children should be the development of moral and religious virtue according to Thomas Becon until the young people 'be made at the last auncient and perfect schollers in the mistery of Christes schole.' At the end of the century William Perkins reached a similar conclusion and wrote that the purpose of education was so that children might 'live well and lead a godly life.'<sup>9</sup> The recognition of this purpose is seen in real life. Brilliana Harley as a young woman wrote in her commonplace book, 'La bonne education nest a'utre chos, qu'en bon et soigneux cultivement de l'ame.'<sup>10</sup> Education was used by these writers to mean the whole process of child rearing; schooling was only a part of parents' responsibility.

The basis of the advice of the prescriptive books on schooling for girls was the notion that provided the books and the contents of girls' education were carefully controlled, daughters would still be conformist and obedient. If learning was to be part of a girl's education it should be additional to instilling approved behavioural norms and should not threaten them. Thomas Salter wrote;

I would not have a Maiden altogether forbidden, or restrained from reading, for so much as the same is not onely profitable to wise and vertuous women, but also a riche and precious Jewell, but I would have her if she reade, to reade no other bookes but suche

---

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Becon, *The governance of vertue*, 1566, Preface, sig. A 4v. William Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 1609, p140.

<sup>10</sup> Brilliana Conway, *Commonplace Book*, NUL, Portland London MSS Pl Fm 5, f101v.

as bee written by godlie Fathers...<sup>11</sup>

In other words, reading added to the virtues of a woman, provided that the books were carefully selected to reinforce the desired traits cultivated by parents of daughters. A girl's honour, virtue and modesty were more important than a reputation for learning.<sup>12</sup> This attitude can also be seen in the opinions expressed by parents in letters. Francis Willoughby of Wollaton Hall, Nottingham represented the view of most parents of his class when he wrote to his daughter Bridget in 1582 explaining;

'tis not beauty nor fortune but good qualities and a virtuous disposition which makes a gentlewoman esteemed, therefore 'tis her good behaviour that must gain her own credit.<sup>13</sup>

The idea that learning could add to the virtue of a woman had already appeared in humanist advice much earlier, in the 1520s for example, in the writings of Vives and Hyrde.<sup>14</sup> The problem of how parents were to control the reading matter of a girl once she had learned to read for herself, exercised other writers besides Salter. The successful inculcation of obedience, which was at the heart of character formation, meant that parents could rely on being able to proscribe certain literature. In 1543, Becon advised that *Robin Hood, Beves of Hampton and Troilus* should be among the books forbidden to girls.<sup>15</sup> At the end of the century, Bruto wrote

---

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Salter, *Mirrhor of modestie to all mothers, matrones and maidens of Englande*, 1579, sig. Ciiir.

<sup>12</sup> See for example G M Bruto, *The necessarie fit and convenient education of a yong gentlewoman*, 1598 sig. F8r; T Salter, 1579, sig. Cir.

<sup>13</sup> HMC, Middleton MSS, 1911, p557.

<sup>14</sup> See D'arne Welch, 1984, pp246-249.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Becon, *The christen state of matrimony*, 1546, plxxviii. Robin Hood and Bevis of Hampton were first printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1500, although both existed in earlier ballad versions for oral delivery. A number of versions of Troilus and Cressida existed

that a woman must not 'read anything that may induce her minde (very delicate of it selfe) to become more feeble and effeminate...' <sup>16</sup> Salter considered that 'wicked adulteries and abhominable fornications' appeared in Homer and in Virgil's *Aeneid*, which made them unsuitable for women to read. His fear for their virtue led him to go as far as suggesting that if chastity was at stake, it would be better if a girl were uneducated. He mused 'I suppose there is no manne of reason and understanding, but had rather love a mayden unlearned and chaste, then one suspected of dishonest life, though never so famous and well learned in Philosophie.' <sup>17</sup> Reading the lives of chaste and virtuous women, such as Judith and Hester and the Christian martyrs, would encourage the development of desirable traits.

For some writers, a girl's upbringing should concentrate on learning housewifely skills. For others, such as Bruto, a girl could be allowed to learn to read once she had mastered domestic occupations. She must avoid reading anything unimproving, lest her mind become more feeble and effeminate. Even Becon, who supported the notion of teaching girls both to read and write, was explicit about the skills he considered it essential for girls of all classes to acquire in addition to literacy. Girls should learn how to weave, wash, wring, sweep, scour, brew and bake so that they would be able 'in time to come to get their living, if need require.' <sup>18</sup>

Ideally, by educating girls at home, parents would be better able to regulate the education their daughters received. However, the conduct book writers recognised that not all

---

including one by Chaucer. They were tales of chivalric life very popular in medieval England, but it was considered that being romances, they were unsuitable for well brought-up young women. The help of Linda Matthews in locating these sources is acknowledged.

<sup>16</sup> G M Bruto, *The necessarie fit and convenient education of a yong gentlewoman*, 1598 sig. D6.

<sup>17</sup> T Salter, *Mirrhor of Modestie*, 1579, sig. B viii v.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Becon, *Catechism*, 1844 ed., p368; *Golden book of christen matrimony*, 1542, sig. D fv.

parents would be able to follow this advice, since many could not afford to pay teachers at home and were not sufficiently well-educated themselves to teach their own children. As early as 1543, Becon advocated the establishment of schools with trained female teachers for girls who could not be taught at home.<sup>19</sup> In 1581 Richard Mulcaster, Headmaster of Merchant Taylors' School and High Master of St Paul's and himself the father of daughters, went further than most of his contemporaries in his support for girls' education. He acknowledged the role of women as the principal pillars of the household, but commented on 'a jewel of such worth in a vessel of such weakness.' Mulcaster excluded them from grammar schools because 'their braines be not so much charged, neither with weight nor with multitude of matters as boyes heades be, and therefore like an empty caske they make the greater noise.'<sup>20</sup>

Mulcaster, like the other prescriptive writers, was anxious not to promote concepts and attitudes which would alter the status quo and challenge the order and stability of a society where each member knew his or her place. He distinguished between the levels of education necessary for different social groups.<sup>21</sup> No evidence has been found relating to his treatment of the education of his own daughters to see whether he put his ideas on girls' education into practice. The detail which Mulcaster applied to his analysis is an indication of the seriousness of his commitment to girls' education, but his books were not widely sold and his influence was therefore largely limited to those people with whom he came in contact in the course of his career in London.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Becon, *Catechism*, 1844 ed., p377.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Mulcaster, *Positions*, 1581, p176.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Mulcaster, 1581, pp178 and 181-3.

<sup>22</sup> Unpublished paper given by Dr R de Molen at St Paul's School, 1990.



A survey of the advice being given to parents in English over the course of the sixteenth century on the upbringing of girls, shows that it came from both Catholic and Protestant writers. This is also true of the period after 1558 when England became officially a Protestant country. Erasmus' works continued to be translated into English. *The civilitie of childhood* was translated from French in 1560, *A modest meane to mariage* was published in English in 1568 and a third edition of *The praise of folly* appeared in 1576. Bruto, whose advice *The necessarie fit and convenient education of a yong gentlewoman*, was translated into English and appeared in 1598 was Italian, and a Catholic. A comparison of the advice shows that both Catholic and Protestant authors were primarily concerned with the moral virtue of young women and how best that should be preserved. Writers of both religious persuasions advised that the ability to read, provided suitable material was chosen, improved a woman's potential to become a good Christian. The detail of the argument varied between writers, as did the level of education recommended, but parents seeking advice on how to bring up their daughter would have found it difficult to divide the advice being given along sectarian lines. This continuity of advice is also seen in the attitudes of the prescriptive books favouring companionate marriage.

As well as positive encouragement in the prescriptive advice, a clear warning of the dangers facing parents who failed to instill appropriate values and behaviour in their daughter was given by some writers. Robert Greene wrote *A disputation betweene a hee conny-catcher, and a shee conny-catcher* to illustrate the terrible fate that awaited the family where parents did not succeed in training their daughter in discipline.<sup>23</sup> The protagonist, as narrator, explained how she had been well-taught as far as book-learning and music were concerned, but her character had been spoiled by her parents'

---

<sup>23</sup> Robert Greene, *A disputation betweene a hee conny-catcher, and a shee conny-catcher, whether a theefe or a whore is most hurtfull in cousonage*, 1592.

indulgence. They had failed to be strict and she had experimented with pre-marital sex. This had led, not to happiness but to a life of crime in the London underworld. She explained that she wanted her story to be known by other girls as a warning. Greene heavily reinforced the advice of the conduct books to parents.

Parents able to read the advice books, were thus encouraged to educate their daughters at least to be able to read, on condition they ensured that their daughters remained chaste, submissive and with housewifely skills. It was left to parents to decide how much teaching their daughters were to be given and where they should be taught.

### Attitudes to girls' education in practice

#### An ideal woman

Before considering the intentions of parents in detail, it is worth examining the character of a woman who was much admired in order to identify the characteristics parents thought desirable. The qualities praised by Richard Smith who described the virtues of Magdalen Montague, widow of Anthony, Viscount Montague can be seen in a number of contemporary personal documents. Smith, one of the priests whom Magdalen Montague, as a Catholic, supported in her house, cannot be considered an unbiased reporter. However, the qualities he listed are an indication of what were considered desirable characteristics in a woman. According to the chapter headings he chose listing her virtues, Magdalen Montague was humble, chaste, patient, liberal towards others and pious. She was obedient, first to her parents and after marriage to her husband. She was generous in her charity and supported about 80 people, nearly all of them Catholic, giving them lodging, food, wages and defence from persecution: she sewed shirts and smocks for the poor. At home, Magdalen Montague was constant in her religion and in widowhood spent a great part of the day

and much of the night in prayer. As well as these feminine virtues, she 'had a most piercing wit, an excellent memory, a profound judgement, a stout and manly courage.'<sup>24</sup> Smith clearly differentiated between feminine and masculine virtues. Intellectual sharpness and judgement appear on his masculine list along with physical courage. Smith admired Magdalen Montague for the masculine virtues he identified, but it was a fine line between admiration and condemnation for denying her femininity and challenging men.

Magdalen Montague was educated at home under the direction of her mother until she was 13, when she was sent to the Countess of Bedford's house, where she lived until she was 16. Here she served as gentlewoman and occasionally chambermaid, even prepared to get up in the night, as Smith put it, 'to perform that base kind of service which curious ears refuse to hear related.' After this she served at Queen Mary's Court, where she was 'addicted to piety.' Magdalen Montague was also a virtuous wife and mother. She was married for 36 years and during that time, loved and served her husband as her lord. She had 8 children herself and was an excellent mother to her husband's step-son. Smith clearly considered her life to be exemplary.<sup>25</sup> The religious observance performed by Magdalen Montague was more intense and lengthy than most other laywomen about whose lives anything is known, but devout Protestants like Lady Margaret Hoby and Lady Grace Mildmay spent much of their time in a similar way.

Magdalen Montague closely resembled the character of the ideal woman of the prescriptive writers. She was educated, (see p5) but she conformed to the ideal of the chaste, submissive, pious and loving wife and mother. However much agreement there was over the character of the ideal daughter, the lack of

---

<sup>24</sup> Richard Smith, *The life of the most honourable and vertuous lady the La. Magdalen viscountesse Montague written in Latin and now translated into English*, 1627, p47.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, 1627, pp3, 4, 12, 13 and 46.



theoretical agreement found in the conduct books about what constituted the ideal education for girls is reflected in practice. Parents showed a range of interpretations of the term education, both in expressed preferences about their daughters' upbringing, and in the execution of their plans

Some of the clearest expressions of parents' attitudes are to be found in wills of parents with young children. The volumes of Essex wills from the Elizabethan period, collated and edited by F G Emmison, are a significant source of information about parental, more frequently paternal intentions regarding the upbringing of their daughters. The accessibility of the wills in the form presented by Emmison, means that large numbers can be read for the main substance of the bequests. Analysis of the wills is used in this section for two purposes, firstly to define parental understanding of the meaning of the term 'education' as applied to girls and secondly as the basis of comparison together with the personal letters and conduct books to see how far the prescriptive advice of the conduct books coincided with lived experience.

#### Attitudes of parents expressed in wills

In 197 Essex wills from the period 1558-1603, where education and bringing up of children was mentioned, the words of the testators relating to their intentions were noted and compared to see how the term education was understood.<sup>26</sup> The social/occupational groups represented in the wills included the gentry, clergy, yeomen, husbandmen, sea-faring men and smiths. For widows no other information about social background was given. Nine out of the 197 wills were made by women.

---

<sup>26</sup> F G Emmison, *Elizabethan Life*, Vols. 3-5, Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, 1976-80; *Essex Wills*, Vols. 1-6, 1982-91; *Essex Wills, The Archdeaconry Courts, 1597-1603*, 1990; *Elizabethan Wills of South-West Essex*, Waddesdon, Kylin Press, 1983; *The Bishop of London's Commissary Court 1569-1578*, Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, 1994.

Many of the will-makers in Essex left general instructions about the education that their children should receive, for example, they frequently expressed a wish for, 'a godly, virtuous and good education and bringing up'; or that 'the children should be kept to school and virtuously brought up'. In one family four daughters and a son were to be brought up 'in honest studies and learning'. The gendered nature of the concept of education in the sixteenth century was made clear in many wills relating to sons and daughters in one family. In 28 of the wills where schooling was specified, testators made a distinction between the education of their sons and daughters and requested a higher level for the boys. For example, in 1593, Henry Skerlett, a husbandman from Bradwell-juxta-Mare, asked that his wife, Thomasine, should bring up the children honestly and virtuously, 'setting my sons to learn to write read and cast accounts and my daughters to serve or any other honest trade of housewifery.'<sup>27</sup> In many of the 28 wills, the schooling of daughters was not requested: girls were to be given a more traditional upbringing. The will of Elizabeth Grace, a widow from Rayleigh, was unusual in that she specified schooling for both grandson and granddaughter, although it was to a different standard. She left her property so that her grandchildren could be sent to school, 'the boy to write and read and the girl to read and sew.'<sup>28</sup> In 16 wills, girls and boys were apparently treated the same. For example, William Browne a gentleman of Colchester, left money to provide for 'sufficient meat, drink, clothing, fostering, teaching, schooling and setting forth according to their behaviour and intelligence' for all his children including the girls.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> F G Emmison, 1991, p42. See also the 1566 will of John Hays, gentleman, in 1978, p212; the will of John Hurrey, husbandman, in 1982, p33.

<sup>28</sup> F G Emmison, 1986, p84.

<sup>29</sup> F G Emmison, 1978, p169. See also for example, the wills of Richard Playsto, 1986, p263; John Hammond, 1593, yeoman, 1991, pp38-9; John Bridge, 1593, yeoman, 1991, p168; and Richard Clarke, 1596, yeoman, 1991, pp230-1.

The more frequent occurrence of education for girls in the wills of gentry or yeomen in comparison with other social groups, shows the importance of social and economic factors influencing girls' education. However, the social standing and occupation of the will-maker appears not to be the determining factor of the provision of girls' education: fathers specifying learning for their daughters were found among husbandmen and smiths. Not all the wills of gentlemen who mentioned the upbringing of daughters, included learning in their specifications.<sup>30</sup>

When parental intentions for girls' education are examined separately, it is possible to obtain a more nuanced interpretation of what testators wanted for their daughters. From a reading of the wills asking for the education of daughters, it is possible to identify three themes specified by testators: bringing up, virtuous education and learning. The categories are not self contained and the edges of the definitions are blurred.

#### Bringing up:

When this is defined, it includes sheltering, supervising, providing meat, drink, clothing, training and at the appropriate time making an apprenticeship or marriage agreement. A yeoman of Rawreth, Edward Taber, in 1571 left his wife responsible for bringing up his children with 'meat, drink, woollen and linen cloth and all necessary for them until they are 18.'<sup>31</sup> Peter Joynar a labourer of Barking in 1560, asked that his wife Elizabeth 'bring up my daughter Barbara till she come to such lawful years as she may be able to help herself...' In order to secure the arrangement he required his wife to put in bonds worth £10.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> See for example, the will of Richard Emerye of Thaxted, gentleman, in Emison, 1986, p442.

<sup>31</sup> F G Emison, 1986, p38.

<sup>32</sup> F G Emison, 1982, p90.

### Virtuous education:

One recurring statement among testators was that daughters should be 'virtuously brought up'; frequent reference was made to 'a godly education and the fear of the Lord', daughters should be brought up 'in virtue', or with 'a good and virtuous education'. This is defined as bringing up a girl in the Christian life, in good manners, obedience, honesty, virtue and humility and skills necessary for the girl in adult life appropriate to her social status. For some parents it involved their daughters learning to read and possibly to write, in order reinforce the lessons for the virtuous life. In 1592, William Lambert, vicar of Hornchurch, left £100 in the hands of Dr Martin Culpeper for his daughter Margaret, so that she should obediently behave herself towards her mother and bestow herself to her mother's liking. He left money for his daughter Elizabeth, to keep her 'with sufficient meat, drink and seemly clothing and learning...'<sup>33</sup> Matthew Erdell of Baldon, a blacksmith, in 1570 left money for his daughter Alice, 'to educate her and bring her up in the fear of God, virtue and learning.'<sup>34</sup> In some cases, 'bringing up in virtue' did not mean teaching daughters to read and write. In cases where the will-maker in his bequest, placed the main emphasis on character formation, the intention was the girl should be brought up with good manners, to be respectful and obedient. In 1560, a Rayleigh husbandman, Robert Stevenson requested that his wife should have the keeping of his two daughters to a lawful age and 'train them in the fear of God and obedience.'<sup>35</sup> In practice the girl could attend catechism classes regularly and learn her lessons from the books read to her to achieve this. She would not necessarily need to be literate to be virtuous.

### Education/Learning:

---

<sup>33</sup> F G Emmison, 1991, p18.

<sup>34</sup> F G Emmison, 1994, p57.

<sup>35</sup> F G Emmison, 1982, p13.

In some wills, this referred specifically to learning or schooling, such as when the phrase 'good education and bringing up in learning' is used. It could also mean character formation combined with learning, such as when godly tuition and education are specified. John Semer, a gentleman, left land to his wife so that she could see his daughter Avice, 'well and virtuously brought up in meat, drink, schooling and other necessaries.'<sup>36</sup> In 1593, Henry Foote, a yeoman from Wivenhoe in Essex, left money to his wife for the education of his daughter 'until she is 14, and have towards it 40/=-, she to be taught to read and make plain work of linen and to be educated in the fear of God...'<sup>37</sup> The education of Henry Foote's daughter contained a practical element so that she would be able to earn her own living before marriage. This necessity is seen in other wills made by fathers of a similar social background.

#### Attitudes of parents expressed in letters

The intentions of the parents about daughters' education can also be seen in letters. Two Protestant martyrs wrote to their wives, just before they were to die, with their last instructions for the upbringing of their daughters. In the reign of Mary, John Careless a Coventry weaver, having been condemned to be burnt, wrote about his daughters:

for God's sake help them to some learning, if it be possible that they may increase in virtue and godly knowledge, which shall be a better dowry to marry them withall, than any worldly substance: and when they become of age, provide them such husbands as fear God, and love his holy word.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> F G Emmison, 1982, p141, 1559. See also the will of William Lambert, 1592, vicar, in 1991, p18; the will of Thomas Baw, 1594, a sea-faring man, in 1991, p157; the will of Matthew Erdell, a blacksmith, 1570, in 1994, p57; the will of Thomas Turner, mercer, 1573, in 1994, p206.

<sup>37</sup> F G Emmison 1980, p125.

<sup>38</sup> ed., H T, *Letters of the Martyrs of the English Church*, London, W Swan Sonnenschein, 1884, pp335-6.

John Penry, a Puritan accused of involvement in the writing of the Marprelate Tracts and condemned for dissent, had four daughters under the age of four when he was hanged in 1593. In his last letters he left instructions for his wife, Helen, on how they should be brought up. He realised that he had no money to provide for them, that their life might be hard and they might have to earn their own living. He insisted that the girls should obey their mother and be ruled by her in all things. He wanted them to be educated if it were possible, 'both to reade and also to write.' Helen's own level of literacy can be placed by the reference in her husband's last letter to her where he refers to the need for her to have the letter read to her. She was probably able to read print, but not the handwriting he sent her.<sup>39</sup> In both these examples, religious belief was a significant motive for educating their daughters. Both fathers wanted their children to continue the faith for which they were about to die.

Among the landed classes, it is possible to gain a more detailed view of the intentions of parents for their daughters, both about their education and the character formation they considered desirable. For example, Richard Whalley, brother-in-law of Lady Joan Barrington of Hatfield, sent two of his daughters to her household for their education. He wrote in July 1628 when he thought he was dying, with his last wishes for Jane the younger girl. He asked Lady Barrington if she would continue to look after her education, emphasising how important he considered it was that Jane should respect her Aunt;

god graunt her grace either to please you, or never to accounte mee her father; and whom I likewise beseech you to bestow in marriage... I have sent her by this bearer the third and last volume of Mr Parkins's Workes: which were her mothers and further will remember her, if I may understand her dutifull

---

<sup>39</sup> B L Add MS 48,064, ff20 and 21v.

care to please you, but good Maddam keepe her from  
over much liberty & fantasticke new fashions...<sup>40</sup>

Richard Whalley, like most other parents, was anxious that his daughter should conform and be obedient. As an orphan, Jane's best opportunity for making a prosperous marriage would be through Lady Barrington's contacts, and her insecure position made conformity to accepted feminine norms even more important. At the same time an interest in books and indirectly in learning was expressed in the letter. Most of the women of the Barrington household were literate: Lady Joan herself, was the centre of an extensive correspondence and a significant figure in the extended family.<sup>41</sup>

Another father, Thomas Stoll, when he wrote trying to find a new position for his daughter after the death of her previous employer, Lady Procter, listed her abilities. 'My daughter can write and reed, and cast accompt, and plaie on thee varginales and sew...' In order to recommend her, he would have taken for granted her character as conforming to accepted norms.<sup>42</sup> By serving in a household a girl would not only acquire social skills and contacts that would be useful to her family, she might also meet a suitable marriage candidate. It was important that the girl should fulfil the expected criteria and parents were anxious in this situation that they had prepared their daughters well.

The education of Lady Frances Hobart was designed to fit her to be the wife of a landowner with a large establishment to manage. Besides learning to play the lute, to sing and to dance;

---

<sup>40</sup> B L Egerton MS 2,644 f275.

<sup>41</sup> See B L Egerton MS 2,645.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Stoll to Thomas Lyttle, B L Althorp MS B2, probably 1620s, undated and unfoliated.

she learned to read and write and cast account nimbly and exactly and to use her needle and order the affairs of an household, things which were afterwards to her and her dear husband also of extraordinary advantage.<sup>43</sup>

The purpose of Lady Hobart's education in this extract was implicit: it was to benefit her husband as well as herself and it was practical. The accomplishments were appropriate for a lady of her social standing and would reflect well on her husband also.

The analysis of parental intentions from the wills demonstrated that parents broadly concurred with the prescriptive advice. At the heart of education for girls was the development of chaste, obedient daughters, skilled in domestic tasks, with sufficient learning to fulfil the roles expected in the families of their marriage partners. This section will consider in more detail the characteristics which were considered desirable in daughters and show how parents endeavoured, with varying degrees of success, to incorporate character formation and learning into the upbringing of their daughters.

Obedience was the single character trait most frequently mentioned by parents as desirable in children. Sons were expected to be obedient as well as daughters, but there was a heavier emphasis in letters on obedient daughters. This incident in the Herrick family, illustrates the importance of obedience to parents. In 1582, Mary had gone to her brother Robert's house and was delaying her return home. John Herrick made his views absolutely clear to her;

...youe knowe by the commandement of God youe ought to be and lyke wisse youe be bound to be obedyent to your parents by the lawe of nature and by the law of

---

<sup>43</sup> John Collinges, *Par Mobile, A short account of the Holy Life and Death of the Lady Frances Hobart of Blickling*, 1669, p4.



the realm. We wold be loth and very sorry that youe shold be so dysobedyent to us or stubborne.

John Herrick was clear about the three-fold basis of his belief; it was sanctioned by God, the law of nature and, he said, the law of the land. The strength of his belief can be measured by the fact that he used the word obedient six times in the course of this one letter. Mary's upbringing should have inculcated an acceptance of this social order.<sup>44</sup> If she were to make an honourable marriage, it was important that her parents guard her reputation for chastity. Time with her brother away from the influence of her parents, might lead to a loss of reputation, and jeopardise her chance of an advantageous marriage. An unmarried woman living with a sibling was not acceptable to him.

In the phraseology of their letters to parents, most daughters accepted that deference and respect was due to them even after they had married and left home. Among the Coke correspondence of the 1630s, are letters written by Sir John Coke's three daughters and his daughter-in-law to him. He was frequently addressed as 'Right Honourable', and several letters concluded 'your dutifull and obedient daughter.' Mary Hartopp began one letter; 'I make bould to present my humble duty to your honer in these few lines and to sertify your honer that wee are all in good health...'<sup>45</sup> So few examples of difficulties between parents and daughters exist among the personal documents, that it leads to the conclusion that parents, on the whole, managed

---

<sup>44</sup> Bodleian, MS ENG. HIST. C474 f73, 1582. For an example of advice to a girl on obedience to her father's wishes, see John Cheke's advice to Penelope Pie after the death of her father, printed in Sir John Harrington, *Mugae Antiquae*, 1769, especially pp33-39.

<sup>45</sup> For a study of the training of girls in obedience see Linda Pollock, 1989, pp231-58. Letters from Mary Hartopp, Anne Sacheverell and Elizabeth Faunt to their father Sir John Coke and Elizabeth Coke to her father-in-law Sir John Coke, B L Add MS 69,873 ff39, 45, 47, 59, 61, 67, 71, 75, 77-85, 1634-1643. See also, Bridget Willoughby to her father, HMC, Middleton MSS, 1911, p557, c.1582; Anne Jones to her mother Lady Jane Maurice, NLW, Clennennau Letters No. 451, undated.

successfully to inculcate habits of obedience.<sup>46</sup> By carefully controlling the contents of studies and the books available, parents ensured the continuing existence of the submissive daughter.

The importance placed on a girl's reputation and honour in public can be seen in the way that Katherine Beaumont's father tried to counter the rumours that were spreading about her. She and Anthony Byron had been married secretly, and as a result he was disinherited by his father, Thomas. As he understood the situation, Katherine's father wrote, she had married for love. As her father, he could not bear to listen to the slanderous reports imputing her chastity and he was taking steps to counter the accusations. 'I dare answer for hir, for the tyme she remayned under the government of hir mother she was an honist mayden brought up in the feare of God, and of education as appertayned to an honest young gentlewoman...'<sup>47</sup>

This example shows the importance of the good name of a girl, not only to the girl herself but to the whole family. If she were publicly known to have behaved badly, it reflected on her upbringing, the character of her parents and their standing in society. Her father saw clearly that if he were not able to counter the rumours, there was no possibility that Anthony's father would restore his son's estate and that her reputation would affect her children's future too; her good character had to be preserved if she were not to be ostracised. Girls had to be above reproach.

The dilemma for parents of substance was that if a girl were

---

<sup>46</sup> Problems between parents and daughters were recorded in correspondence between Sir John Lyttleton and his daughter Elizabeth Willoughby; Alice Fitton and Anne Newdigate; Penelope Gage and her mother Lady Rivers in 1640; and Margaret Kytson and her mother in 1572. HMC Middleton MSS, 1911, pp545-6; WRO, Newdigate CR 136 B122; CUL, Hengrave 88 Vol.II No. 147; Hengrave Vol. II No. 59.

<sup>47</sup> ESRO, ASHburnham. 839. c.1590.

brought up to be submissive, quiet and withdrawn from the world, with no other attributes, there could be situations in her life for which she would be ill-equipped to deal. Frequent absences by husbands on a variety of business matters, unexpected local crises, the dangers created by religious persecution and, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the cataclysm of the Civil War, placed heavy responsibilities on the women of the family. The masculine characteristics Richard Smith admired in Magdalen Montague, were needed by other Catholic women who had to be prepared to suffer in the name of their faith. Their courage and fortitude was praised in the martyrologies published abroad.<sup>48</sup> Lady Grace Babthorpe's account of her experience in York Castle included a description of bravery in prison. When the Earl of Exeter forced the prisoners to hear sermons and they refused to go, they were dragged there; when they stopped their ears, their hands were tied down. Grace Babthorpe arranged for a priest to come to her window so she could hear Mass.<sup>49</sup> During the Civil War, Priam Davies, who spent some time under siege with the Puritan, Lady Brilliana Harley, described her as 'this noble lady, who commanded in chief, I may truly say with such a masculine bravery, both for religion, resolution, wisdom, and warlike policy, that her equal I never yet saw...'<sup>50</sup> This paradox of the admirable, submissive woman on the one hand, who sought her husband's advice constantly when managing the estate, and yet was able, when the occasion demanded to become strong, independent and capable of leadership, is striking. Linda Pollock's article explored some explanations of this.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, John Mush's biography of Margaret Clitherow printed in ed. John Morris, *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, London, Burns and Oates, Third Series, 1877, pp360-440.

<sup>49</sup> Narrative of Lady Grace Babthorpe, WDA, MS AAW/A Vol. VI No. 100.

<sup>50</sup> Jacqueline Eales, 1990, p173.

<sup>51</sup> Linda Pollock, 1989.

Parents were careful to raise conformist daughters to avoid developing those traits which were considered unacceptable in women. An example of the notoriety possible when a woman defied convention, can be seen in this description of Anne Stanhope, Duchess of Somerset by John Smyth, steward and biographer of the Berkeley family of Gloucestershire.

Shee is published to bee a woman for many imperfections intollerable, for pride monstrous, exceedingly both subtill and violent in accomplishing her ends, for which shee spurned over all respects both of conscience and shame, etc. And brought to fatall destinies both her husband and his brother, and some of her own kindred. But how deservedly marked with that character, I know not.<sup>52</sup>

This extract is interesting for two reasons. Firstly it illustrates characteristics undesirable in a woman and secondly it shows the importance of reputation. At the end of Smyth's account which he included in his *History of the Berkeley family*, he admitted that he had not made enquiries before reporting negative comments. Even if Smyth's comments were exaggerated, it shows that Anne Stanhope was a woman who challenged accepted female norms.

Some women were prepared to show anger in letters, in direct challenge to convention. In a dispute which developed between Joan Herrick and Lady Anne Allott, over the leasing of a house in Wood Street, London, in 1605, Joan Herrick wrote an ill-advised letter to Lady Anne Allott. Robert Mellish, Lady Anne's son, protested at his mother's treatment and wrote to Sir William Herrick, Lady Joan's husband. In his letter he referred in detail to what had been in Joan's letter.

When I had redd it, I was much astonished, that suche malicious stuffe shoulde come from the penn of a woman, mucche more of a Lady... for a woman and a

---

<sup>52</sup> John Smyth, *Lives of the Berkeleys*, ed. Sir J Maclean, Gloucester and Bristol Archeological Society, 1883 and 1885, Vol. II p430.

Ladey to ungorge hir stomacke by her malicious untrewē and collerick speaking and wriggling, and that to detract and deforme an aged woman, a Lady also, farr before hir in reputacion, credit, and other gyftes...

He ended the letter; 'God give my Lady Joane Herrick, a more charetable tounge and penn etc.' Robert Mellish was appalled by the language used by a woman, moreover one with a title who ought to know better. Having ascertained that the letter had been sent without Sir William's knowledge, he was prepared to take less serious action to defend his mother. There is the implication in his words that a woman could not quite be held responsible for her actions.<sup>53</sup>

The strong adverse reaction to women who challenged behavioural norms either in behaviour or in the language they used, goes a long way to explaining the reasons why parents were so careful in the formation of their daughters' characters.

### Influences on parents in the sixteenth century

Parental attitudes towards what constituted 'education' for girls did change over the course of the sixteenth century as a result of a number of new developments. The influence of these can be shown by comparing the evidence regarding girls' education at the beginning of the sixteenth century with the situation a century later.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, there were some girls, mainly among the aristocracy, who had been classically educated at home or who had been educated at the convent

---

<sup>53</sup> Bodleian, MS ENG. HIST. C484 f70, 1612. See also, Countess of Bath to Mr Savage, printed in John Gage, 1822, pp169-70.

schools which were not replaced after the Dissolution.<sup>54</sup> Bridget, daughter of Lord Lisle, and her cousin, Mary Pole, attended a convent school near Winchester, where 26 'children of lords, knights and gentlemen' were being educated. By February 1535, Bridget had been at the school for 85 weeks and two matins books had been bought for her, although it is not known whether she learned to write. Anne and Mary Basset, Lord Lisle's step-daughters, were sent to live in French families to learn the language and suitable behaviour.<sup>55</sup> For most girls of the landed classes, however, education concentrated on character formation and training in domestic skills: firstly, to develop pleasing behaviour and secondly, to give them the training that would give them the skills they needed to manage households and make them desirable wives. There are few examples of letters written or signed by women from this period. However, by the beginning of the seventeenth century many of the women in the families studied were able to write or sign their own letters. This will be considered further in Chapter Five. Even outside the ranks of the landed families some parents expressed interest in educating daughters, as the survey of Essex wills has shown.

Over the course of the sixteenth century there were a number of developments which influenced parents of both boys and girls in deciding how to bring up their children. Those developments which had an impact on the upbringing of girls will be examined. The rapid increase in the number of books printed in the vernacular permitted the dissemination of ideas and provided a stimulus to parents to educate their children. Many of the prescriptive conduct books giving advice on family life to parents which appeared from the 1530s, (see discussions in Chapters Two, Three & Four below) advised that some teaching would enable the girls to be better Christians,

---

<sup>54</sup> Maria Dowling, 1986, Chapter 7.

<sup>55</sup> ed. Muriel St Clare Byrne, *The Lisle Letters*, London, Penguin Books, 1985, pp138-40 and 155-176.

wives and mothers. Some of them were deliberately aimed at the popular end of the market and were printed in black type; the type-face read by the less well-educated. The popularity of the books varied widely: while some of the books went into many editions, others had a small circulation. Edward Dering's *A short catechisme for householders*, first published in 1580 had 27 editions; Richard Mulcaster's *Positions* only one. Twenty four editions of Philip Stubbes account of the life and death of his wife Katherine entitled, *A christall glasse for Christian women* appeared before 1637.

An important question therefore, to ask is: how influential in practice, were the conduct books on sixteenth-century parents? An indication of how many books were sold can be estimated from the number of editions listed, but whether they were read is another matter. Although there were 24 editions of Philip Stubbes' book, no reference has been found in this study to anyone reading or commenting on it. There are few mentions of the conduct books in the letters and wills of the period, but we do know that William Perkins was read; a copy of the third volume of his *Complete Works* which had belonged to her mother was given to Jane, daughter of Richard Whalley, in 1628. William Perkins was also cited as a source in Brilliana Harley's *Commonplace Book* written when she was a girl.<sup>56</sup> There were at least 14 editions of William Perkins' *Collected Works* between 1597 and 1635 and so it must have been widely available. All that is clear about the conduct books is that they were present in some houses: they could be consulted and might form the basis of a discussion or sermon, or be used as reading material as part of the educational process. The conduct books could help to form a climate of opinion fostering a particular form of behaviour for example in parenting, or to encourage the development of the desired norms of behaviour in growing children in order to reinforce the lessons for daughters to be submissive, chaste and

---

<sup>56</sup> Richard Whalley in a letter to Lady Joan Barrington, B L Egerton MS 2,644 f275. Brilliana Conway's (Harley) *Commonplace Book*, NUL, Portland London MSS Pl Fm 5.

obedient. However this study will show that by comparing the realities of women's lives with the views expressed in the conduct books, any further claim for the influence of conduct books would be unfounded in practice.

Advice on marriage in the sixteenth century increasingly emphasised the positive benefits of marriage and the importance of friendship between husband and wife. This argument is developed in more detail in Chapter Three, below. The same caution has to be exercised with the marriage advice as with the conduct books. It is difficult to make a direct causal connection between the advice contained in the guidance for parents and the practice of child-rearing, but the frequency with which companionate marriage was praised in popular works undoubtedly had a long term effect on parental attitudes.

A stimulus to the desire for education came from the number of books appearing in print in English annually.<sup>57</sup> These increased enormously in number in the period, particularly after the middle of the century. In 1538, 129 books were listed in the Stationers' records, in 1578, 219 books appeared and in 1598 there were 295.<sup>58</sup> These provided both an incentive to read and the texts with which reading could be taught. The numbers printed for each edition varied according to size and could be up to 3000 copies. According to Rosemary O'Day, between 1576 and 1640 some 300,000 copies of books came off the London printing presses annually.<sup>59</sup> Some of the books were aimed at women readers and included practical advice on household management, midwifery and catechisms for use in the home. Many

---

<sup>57</sup> L B Wright in 1965, pp103-118, discussed women's interest in books in the sixteenth century. While there are problems over his interpretation; for example, the author's views on female interest in romance is suspect and he ignored the Catholic dimension of the debate, he made a useful contribution to the discussion of women's interest in reading.

<sup>58</sup> Figures taken from STC Chronological Index compiled by Philip Rider, provisional draft, 1989.

<sup>59</sup> Rosemary O'Day, 1982, p17.



of these were popular and sold well, for example, Hugh Platt's *Delights for Ladies*, first published in 1599 had 16 editions before 1640, and John Partridge's *The treasure of commodious conceits and hidden secrets*, went into 11 editions after being published in 1573. These books contained recipes, advice on gardening and instructions on medicines. In Suzanne Hull's basic list of books for women 1570-1640 were 169 titles in c.500 editions.<sup>60</sup>

The interest of women in books can be judged by the number of dedications of books, both domestic and literary, to individual women or to women in general. It is also an indication that women were expected to be able to read them and a sign that the author, almost always a man, thought that appealing to a woman might bring him some patronage. Suzanne Hull counted 1,780 books published between 1475 and 1640 dedicated to 800 different women.<sup>61</sup>

The cost of buying books reduced dramatically over the course of the century and new forms of cheap print made books more accessible. Tessa Watt in *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, calculated that 'book prices remained steady from 1560 to 1635, when other commodities more than doubled in price and wages rose by a half to two-thirds.' By the end of the century, pamphlets, almanacs and books of news were appearing in increasing quantities; cheap print could be found in households at all social levels and many items had a broad appeal.<sup>62</sup> Seventy four almanacs appeared between 1558 and 1603, and small numbers of almanacs can be found in several

---

<sup>60</sup> John Partridge, *The treasure of commodious conceits and hidden secrets and may be called the huswifes closet of healthfull provision*, 1573. Philip Stubbes, *A christall glasse for Christian women*, 1591. Hugh Platt, *Delights for ladies*, 1599. Titles for women listed in Suzanne Hull, 1982, pp144-217.

<sup>61</sup> Suzanne Hull, 1982, p20.

<sup>62</sup> Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p261.

manuscript collections.<sup>63</sup> Cheap pamphlets of their very nature were ephemeral, but substantial numbers have been found: 271 news pamphlets from the period 1590-1610 and 95 further titles were listed in the Stationers' Register for the same period.<sup>64</sup> The appearance of these items widened the choice of reading matter and expanded the number of potential readers to include those who were not able to afford to buy books. Many of these small items were printed in black type. Books of news appear several times in the accounts of Lady Joan Barrington in the 1620s. She was a woman who liked to be informed about events in the wider world; news books included items from Europe as well as England. Her family sent her news from London when they were there and the books extended her knowledge.<sup>65</sup> For girls, the use of the vernacular in printed books was particularly important, as classical learning was part of the curriculum for a minority. (See p195)

Parents who wished to educate their children, but lacked the skills to teach them, were able by the latter part of the sixteenth century to benefit from the publication of manuals designed to make their task easier. William Kempe aimed his book, *The education of children in learning*, at parents as well as teachers, because of their importance in the learning process. He considered private tuition was best, but conceded that many parents would not be able to afford this and would have to send their children to school. Learning, he believed, was necessary for all sorts and degrees of men. Having stated the 'good learning is the very foundation and groundworke of all good in every estate as well private as publike'; he went on to give an example of a virtuous king, Alfred, who had

---

<sup>63</sup> S J R Hood, 'The Impact of Protestantism on the Renaissance Ideal of Women in Tudor England', Unpublished PhD, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1977, p230.

<sup>64</sup> Tessa Watt, 1994, p264, note 37.

<sup>65</sup> See Judith Barrington to Lady Joan Barrington, B L Egerton MS 2,645 f319, 1631; and My Ladies Book Michaelmas 1628, the accounts of Lady Joan Barrington, ERO, D/DBa A15.

encouraged education.<sup>66</sup>

Edward Coote, like William Kempe, referred to children rather than boys in *The English schoole-maister*. This was written to teach children how to read, using a scheme which explained spelling rules and how to divide words into syllables. Marginal instructions to the teacher indicated how the book should be used. An indication of the existence of women teachers can be deduced from an exercise where a debate was devised between a school-master and a school-mistress. This was a popular book, being reprinted 28 times between 1596 and 1640.<sup>67</sup>

Neither Kempe nor Coote wrote specifically about girls in the way that Mulcaster had done, but they wrote about the importance of educating children, and Coote gave practical assistance with teaching reading. These books helped to create a climate of opinion among parents fostering a favourable attitude towards teaching girls, and the teaching manuals provided the means by which children could even be taught by non-experts. There was still some prejudice against women teachers. At the turn of the seventeenth century, William Perkins did not approve of women in the class-room. To him, teaching, since it meant speaking in public, was comparable with preaching and thus forbidden to women.<sup>68</sup>

Parents were encouraged to teach their daughters to write by the publication of books such as Martin Billingsley's, *The pens excellencie*. He wrote contradicting, as he put it 'that ungrounded opinion of many, who affirm writing to bee altogether unnecessary for women.' He believed it was particularly useful to them because of their short memories,

---

<sup>66</sup> William Kempe, *The education of children in learning*, 1588, Preface A2 and sig. D3r.

<sup>67</sup> Edward Coote, *The English schoolemaister, teaching all his scholars the order of distinct reading*, 1596.

<sup>68</sup> William Perkins, Exposition of the second chapter of the Revelation, in *Collected Works*, 1613, Vol. III p314.

since it would enable them to 'commit many worthy and excellent things to writing.' He argued that they should not be taught secretary hand since it was too difficult for them and they did not have enough patience to learn, but they should be taught Roman script.<sup>69</sup> Most of the women used a version of italic or cursive script in their letters.

Some historians have traced a strong link between the growth of Protestantism in England and increasing interest in girls' education, since the ability to read the Bible would enable them to be active believers and to bring up their children in the faith.<sup>70</sup> They viewed the spiritualised household as a Protestant creation; but this underplays the importance of humanist writings from the early part of the century. While Protestantism was an important influence on parents deciding how far they should educate their daughters, Catholic parents were making similar decisions. The development of strong Christians was an aim promoted by both Catholic and Protestant writers of conduct books. A comparison of the letter collections of Protestant families and the Catholic Kytsons and Throckmortons, shows little difference in the numbers of women writing letters. For parents of both persecuted religious groups, Catholics and extreme Puritans like Penry, educated mothers were essential in preserving faiths within the family, since open public worship was forbidden. The recently published work by Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships 1500-1900*, confirms the findings of this

---

<sup>69</sup> Martin Billingsley, *The pens excellencie*, 1618, C2 r.

<sup>70</sup> One of the strongest claims was made by S J R Hood, in 'The impact of Protestantism on the Renaissance ideal of women in Tudor England', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1977. See also the discussion in, Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England*, London, Macmillan, 1988. R Valerie Lucas' essay, 'Puritan Preaching and the Politics of the Family' is an example of an interpretation which gives too much weight to a distinctive Puritan attitude to family life; in ed. Anne M Haselkorn and Betty Travitsky, *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1990.

study.<sup>71</sup>

The economic circumstances and status of the family undoubtedly influenced parental decisions relating to daughters' education: could they afford schooling for their daughter? Again, while recognising the importance of this factor, the analysis of the Essex wills shows that in the last resort it was parental attitudes, and in particular the father's, which were crucial to the final result. Some poor parents, for example farm labourers, decided that they wished their daughter to be literate. A number of factors influenced this decision: perhaps most importantly, the view the father had of her future role as wife and mother and whether education was essential to her ability to carry out her roles effectively. These roles will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Three and Four.

As mothers, women had an important role in the godly upbringing of their children while young, particularly daughters, and thus had a duty to future generations. Thomas Becon and others advocated the teaching of girls to read, considering it an important attribute for mothers in the successful raising of children. It allowed them to set a good example and to participate directly in the spiritual training of dependents. Although the Catechism could be learned by heart and taught without the teacher being able to read, there are sufficient references in correspondence to literate mothers, either directing or being closely involved in the religious and educational studies of their children, to suggest that this was an important function of the mother in the household.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900*, London, Macmillan, 1994, pp39-44.

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, the letters of Katherine Paston to her son, B L Add MS 27,447 ff231-298, and Add MS 36,988 ff25-31: Brilliana Harley wrote a 19 page booklet of advice for her son Edward, B L Add MS 70,118, unfoliated and undated: Penelope Merry to her grandmother Countess Rivers on the subject of her daughter's education, possibly 1628, CUL, Hengrave MS 88 Vol. II No. 139. The educational role of mothers is discussed at length in Charlton,

Over the course of the sixteenth century these developments combined to affect the decisions of parents concerning the upbringing of their daughters leading many of them to include teaching as part of the upbringing of their daughters.

### The location and means of education

In spite of the research that has already been carried out into girls' education there is a lack of evidence about where girls were taught and who taught them. Little consideration has been given to the teaching of Catholic girls, whose experience of education was likely to be very different because of the Recusancy laws or to the musical education of girls.<sup>73</sup> The absence of girls' schools at the end of the sixteenth century and the emphasis of the conduct books on the importance of the seclusion of respectable daughters, meant that for virtually all the girls of the landed classes, education took place within the household. For evidence of their teaching, collections of personal documents must be searched.

### At home.

Even within the family papers with large numbers of literate women studied in the course of this research, there were few items directly relevant to organising girls' education. This suggests that often the arrangements made for teaching girls were informal, and that in many cases the responsibility for teaching girls probably rested heavily on mothers. This is true of both Catholic and Protestant families. Most of the women who joined the convents abroad in the early days of their foundations, had been educated at home in England,

---

1994.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, D M Heads, 1928, pp193-237: Dorothy Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1929, Chapter X: K Charlton, 1965, pp208-13, 1981, pp3-18: Norma McMullen, 1977, pp91-4: Rosemary O'Day, 1982, pp183-7.

within their families. Sir Thomas Wiseman from Essex, had four daughters to whom he taught Latin; they subsequently all became nuns. Elizabeth Clifford, brought up by her Protestant grandmother after the death of her mother, was educated and spent much time reading scripture so that she might better understand her father's Catholic religion.<sup>74</sup>

Those Catholic girls who knew Latin and were able to become nuns, came from the gentry classes; only two girls whose names appear in the lists in the early convent archives studied are defined as having yeomen fathers. It was expensive and difficult to provide an education which included a study of Latin and very risky to send daughters abroad either for education or to join a convent. As with other religious minorities, such as the Puritans John Penry and Brilliana Harley, a serious commitment to a minority religious group presupposed education in order to read the literature and participate.

Governesses were employed in a few families to teach girls music and sewing as well reading and writing. Between 1550 and 1620 the names of 13 governesses are known. For example, in 1611 Elizabeth Cutler from Detford, became governess at Gawsworth Hall, the Cheshire home of the Fyttons in Cheshire. Persey, described as a female servant, was rewarded between 1558 and 1560 for 'teaching the gentlewomen to play on the virginals' at Ingatestone for the Petre family. Elizabeth Bolde, the divorced wife of Bishop Thornborough, herself the daughter of a grammar school teacher in Salisbury, went to live in the house of a widower, Robert Hughson, in order to teach his eight children. He was a grocer in London whose wife, Debora, had died in childbirth. Lettice Gawdy gave a testimonial to one woman trying to get work as a governess.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Dom Adam Hamilton, 1904, Vol. I, pp47-55 and 155.

<sup>75</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Cutler to her mother, 26 August 1611, on exhibition at Gawsworth Hall. My thanks to Gill Jones for locating this reference. D C Price, *Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, Chapter 3. The information

This evidence although sparse, suggests not only that girls were being taught, but that women could earn a living and have a roof over their head from teaching, and that good teachers could expect to be given references and to move on to other positions when their services were no longer required. The notebooks of Rachael Fane, brought up and educated at Knole in Kent provide evidence of a girl being taught at home.<sup>76</sup>

Besides the governesses noted above, several male tutors were employed to teach girls in households where there were sons and daughters, but there is little evidence of male tutors being hired specifically to teach daughters. Many of the music teachers were male.<sup>77</sup> Cecilie Price, daughter of Mr John Price was one such exception. She had been brought up as a Protestant with a tutor at home, learnt to speak French and had subsequently converted to Catholicism. Lady Anne Clifford had a tutor as well as a governess. She was taught French and heard Montaigne's essays, she learnt music and dancing. In the accounts instruments purchased for her are listed; a pair of organs, lutes, theorbos, and a harpsichord.<sup>78</sup>

Evidence of payments for girls' education at home can be seen in some of the family accounts. In a substantial inventory from 1566 Thomas Sudbury, a yeoman from South Muskham in Nottinghamshire, listed, among other items, 1d for a book: paid to Henry Sudbury, a quire of paper 4d (twice), his board

---

comes from the case brought by Bishop Thornborough against Elizabeth Bolde in PRO REQ 2/51/45. My thanks to Mary Prior for this reference. Lettice Gawdy to her husband Framlingham, B L Add MS 27,395 f147.

<sup>76</sup> Notebooks of Rachael Fane, CKS, U269 F 38/1. For further discussion of her education see Chapter Five, below.

<sup>77</sup> See for example, the *Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne*, ed. Osborn, 1962.

<sup>78</sup> Obituary Notices of the Benedictine Abbey of Ghent, *Catholic Record Society*, Misc. XI, 1917, p13. T D Whitaker, *History and Antiquities of Craven*, London, Nichols and Son, 1805, pp277, 279-81, 302.



£1, for teaching Elizabeth 1/8.<sup>79</sup> The accounts of Anne Newdigate for 1608-14, listed expenses for teaching the children including;

a booke for Mall	0	1	[]
four bookes for the boyes	0	1	4
lute stringes for Jacke	0	7	8
a farm for Mall	0	5	0
a paper farm for Lettice	0	0	6 <sup>80</sup>

The governess of Francis and Margaret Willoughby of Wollaton was paid £4 for teaching them for a year and a half; other items in the accounts include the cost of a 'lytle byble for my cosyn Margaret vis viiid... for twoe frenche booke xxd. At Hengrave in Suffolk, 'two grammar books for Mistress Margaret and Mistress Mary Kytson' cost xviiid.<sup>81</sup>

Evidence of a musical education is found in a number of landed households. Table 2 shows that music for girls was mentioned in 6 collections of family papers, including Herrick, Wynn and Newdigate. William Byrd was engaged to teach music to the daughter of the Duke of Northumberland.<sup>82</sup> Hengrave, the home of the Kytson family, was a particularly musical household. The 1603 inventory lists a large number of instruments, including 6 viols, 6 violins, 2 sackbuts, a pair of double virginals and a pair of organs. Among the music books are listed lute books, a number of song books with up to 8 parts, pavannes and galliards. In the accounts the payment is noted of £4 to 'one Cosen for teaching the children of the virginalls from Christmas until Easter'. Elizabeth Kytson played the lute, and a musician, Robert Johnson, was in

<sup>79</sup> ed. P A Kennedy, *Nottinghamshire Household Inventories, Thoroton Society Record Series*, Vol. XXII 1962, pp91.

<sup>80</sup> Accounts of Lady Anne Newdigate 1608-14, WRO, C136/B55, pp2 and 4.

<sup>81</sup> HMC Middleton MSS, 1911, p404. John Gage, 1822, p193.

<sup>82</sup> B L Lansdowne MS 29, No. 38, Feb 1579.

residence for long periods of time. The quantity of instruments and the number of parts in the songs listed suggest that many members of the household participated in making music.<sup>83</sup>

The musical families of East Anglia, the Kytsons, the Pastons and the Manners, were interconnected, either making recommendations to each other or meeting for musical occasions; for example, in 1587 Edward Paston wrote to Earl Manners recommending a Norwich organist to teach his daughter the virginals.<sup>84</sup> Hardwick in Derbyshire, the home of Bess, Countess of Shrewsbury, was another musical house: by the end of the sixteenth century they employed a musician. Arabella Stewart employed a lutenist and Wilbye was among the composers who dedicated sets of madrigals to her. The Willoughby family of Nottingham, was connected with music of a high standard and Margaret Willoughby learned to play the virginals. Lady Frances and Lady Elizabeth Manners, daughters of the Earl of Rutland, were taught music. Frances had a viola da gamba bought for her, and Elizabeth was learning to sing. The quality of musicianship in these households was such that the great composers of the day wrote for them. As in the case with classically educated girls, these were the elites: few parents had either the money or the inclination to be as serious about their daughters' musical studies as the Kytsons were. Musicians themselves, realised that they had to write compositions which were not too difficult; titles such as Thomas Morley's *A plaine and easie introduction to practycall musicke*, published in 1597, were written for general consumption.

Examples of girls from musically less dedicated backgrounds appear in cursory references in wills and as part of general

---

<sup>83</sup> John Gage, 1822, pp23-5 and 205.

<sup>84</sup> D C Price, *Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p96.

descriptions of their attributes. Robert Herrick's will in 1618 gave to Dorcas her virginals and her cithern; and of Lady Katherine Berkeley it was said 'At the lute shee played admirably and in her private chamber would often singe thereto, to the ravishment of the hearers.'<sup>85</sup> William Wynn sent a viol and a book of songs for Mary Bodvel at Gwydir in the 1620s. Sir John Heveningham wrote to his sister-in-law in 1622 reporting that a second-hand chest of viols was for sale, costing £10.<sup>86</sup>

Thomas Whythorne, in his autobiographical writing, described teaching girls of gentry families in the country and in London. He disguised his account so it is impossible to find the names of the families where he taught. He was an egocentric young man, generally convinced that one of the women of the house was in love with him. Teaching music must have allowed much closer proximity to his pupil than was the case with other academic studies, and contributed to stories about unseemly behaviour between pupil and teacher.<sup>87</sup>

The gendered attitude towards education that has been seen expressed in the conduct books, in many letters and in wills, is also apparent in the arrangements made in gentry families for their children's education. In several households with boys and girls employing a tutor, the tutor was engaged specifically to teach the boys. At Ashton Court, near Bristol, a tutor was hired for Hugh Smyth. Although there were girls who learned how to write in the family, their education was never mentioned by their mother, Florence. John and Marie Coke employed a tutor for their sons who were sent to Cambridge,

---

<sup>85</sup> Copy of Robert Herrick's will, Bodleian MS ENG. HIST. C478 ff212-3. On Katherine Berkeley, see John Smyth, 1883, Vol. II, p383.

<sup>86</sup> NLW, Wynn of Gwydir Papers, No. 1165; Sir John Heveningham to Lady Katherine Paston, B L Add MS 36,988 f21.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Whythorne, *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne*, ed. J M Osborn, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962.

but the education of their daughters is never referred to in letters although their writing indicates some years of teaching.<sup>88</sup> Anne Newdigate, who wrote her own will in 1618, specified...

that my boyes may be brought uppe in good learninge and both they and my daughters to be bred uppe in virteous and godlie lyffe in our Catholick and Protestant Religion... And when my boyes are of fittyng learninge and yeares that they maye goe to the Universities and Innes of Courte.<sup>89</sup>

In the families whose papers were studied in detail, where there were sons, at least one was sent to Oxford, Cambridge or the Inns of Court. Some of the parents, including mothers, when they were making arrangements for appointing tutors or selecting other stages in their sons' education, revealed an extensive knowledge of the educational opportunities available. They were much more reticent about the process of their daughters' education. Occasionally there are references to expenses for books or music in the accounts, but only in a few cases is anything else known. From this it can be deduced that girls' education was more informal in its nature and the curriculum more restricted than for boys who were more frequently sent to school.<sup>90</sup>

### Schooling

The emphasis of this study on the papers from the gentry classes and the absence of their daughters from schools, means that a systematic survey of schooling available for girls was not undertaken. Some information about petty schools was found and an overview is given here as an indication of the kind of

---

<sup>88</sup> Florence Smyth to her husband Thomas, BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court Papers, AC/C60/19, late 1630s. Marie Coke to her husband John, B L Add MS 64,878 f49, c.1623.

<sup>89</sup> Newdigate-Newdegate A E, *Gossip from a muniment room*, London, David Nutt, 1897, pp150-1.

<sup>90</sup> For further discussion about the education of boys in this period see, for example, Charlton, 1965, Chapter 6, and O'Day, 1982, Chapters 3 and 4.

teaching available to girls outside the landed classes. Most of the daughters of poorer parents learning to read, would have attended the petty schools which taught the basic literacy skills. These were generally very small schools whose existence depended on the presence of a single school teacher who was not always replaced immediately they left. The school's existence was not therefore continuous and it is very difficult to obtain much information about them. However, they did become more numerous over the course of the sixteenth century. Studies such as Margaret Spufford's *Contrasting Communities* and Clark's *English Provincial Society*, show how much educational provision there was in the localities they studied, but there are still many counties to be surveyed. Clark found petty schools in most towns in Kent: Sittingbourne had three in 1590, Canterbury, an important centre for the book trade had 10 in the early 1600s. There is evidence of girls attending petty schools in Canterbury, some of which were run by women.<sup>91</sup> In London, Christ's Hospital admitted girls as well as boys as beginners from its foundation in 1552. The curriculum was gender specific; girls were taught reading, needlework and religious studies. It was not until 1658 that they were taught to write. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the girls made all the linen for themselves and the boys. The aim of the girls' programme of learning was to train them so that the Governors could put them in service with 'honest personnes and such as be well able to kepe them and to bring them up to suche facultie, service or occupation as they may be good members in the commonwealthe.'<sup>92</sup>

There were women teachers as well as men in the petty schools,

---

<sup>91</sup> Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, Cambridge, 1974, see Part Two, pp171-218. Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Politics and Society in Kent 1500-1640*, Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1977, p192 and see Chapter 6, pp185-220. John Strype, *Life and Acts of John Whitgift*, London, 1718, App. Book IV XXXVII, p225.

<sup>92</sup> William Lemprière, *A History of the Girls' School of Christ's Hospital London, Hoddeston and Hertford*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1924, pp4-6 & 8.

but because girls were excluded from the universities and few of them attended grammar schools their qualifications were likely to be lower than for men. Foster Watson found five Huguenot women teachers in London in the late sixteenth century and some husband and wife teams. Jay Anglin, in his survey of the London diocese found 30 women who had unlicensed reading schools in their houses, and five who received licences. Evidence from Essex about some women teachers emerged because of complaints that they were teaching without licences.<sup>93</sup> The 1571-2 Census in Norwich, found in every ward 'select' women who had been appointed to teach poor children to work or learn letters.<sup>94</sup> From this evidence, it would suggest that some of these teachers, at best, had a rudimentary education and some may have learned techniques of imparting a skill which they had not themselves mastered.

The number of girls attending higher level schools, for example grammar schools remains a matter for conjecture.<sup>95</sup> In the absence of pupil lists, the intentions of the founders as expressed in the statutes remain the main source of evidence for the attendance of girls. The use of the word 'children' in documents is problematic, since it may or may not include girls, and the numbers of girls known to have attended over the latter half of the sixteenth century remains very small. In none of the family papers studied was there any reference to a girl having attended grammar school. Rosemary O'Day found evidence of a girls' school at Windsor in the late sixteenth century under the direction of Anne Higginson. There were 20 boarders and 10 day pupils who were taught 'to work,

---

<sup>93</sup> Foster Watson, *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society*, 1909-11, Vol. 9, pp331-6; Jay P Anglin, *The expansion of Literacy: Opportunities for the study of the Three Rs in the London Diocese of Elizabeth I*, *Guildhall Studies in London History*, April 1980; F G Emmison, 1973, p317.

<sup>94</sup> *Norwich Census of the Poor 1571*, *Norfolk Record Society XL*, 1971, see W K Jordan, *Charities of Rural England*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1961, p154.

<sup>95</sup> Rosemary O'Day, 1982, p185.

reading, writing and dancing...': music was an extra."<sup>96</sup> No evidence of another girls' school in England has yet been found for this period. Several foundations for girls were established in the first part of the seventeenth century which provided places for the 'middling sort': the earliest being the Red Maids school in Bristol founded in 1634."<sup>97</sup>

Some Catholic English girls were educated in convents abroad, even before the founding of the English convent schools in the Low Countries; for example, the grandchildren of Sir Thomas More. Dr John Clement, who married More's adopted daughter Margaret Giggs, went to live in Bruges during Edward's reign. Their daughters, Margaret and Dorothy, were taught both Greek and Latin by Elizabeth Woodford, a retired nun and by their father. Margaret later joined the school at the Flemish convent in Louvain. At the end of the sixteenth century St Ursula's in Louvain had an English Chaplain who, in Mary's reign, had been headmaster of the free school at St Edmundsbury, which helped to attract English pupils."<sup>98</sup>

The number of Catholic girls at school increased after the foundation of the first of the English Convents abroad by Lady Mary Percy in Brussels in 1598. This was followed by at least seven other foundations in Flanders and France before 1632. Most of these houses made provision for the separate education of girls as pupils who were attached to the convent. Some of the pupils went on to join the convents as novices but others returned to England, married and had families. The dates of the foundations including the important school established by Mary Ward at St Omer in 1609, mean that their main influence arrived too late to have an impact on girls for the purposes

---

<sup>96</sup> Rosemary O'Day, 1982, p186.

<sup>97</sup> Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, Routledge, London, 1993, p56.

<sup>98</sup> Hamilton, 1904, pp25-6. P K Guilday, *The English Catholic Refugees on the Continent*, London, Longmans Green, 1914, pp378 and 379-80.

of this study.”

### Conclusions

The lack of evidence about where girls were taught and by whom, means that a study of girls' education has to be approached indirectly via documents which illustrate their skill, and through a study of attitudes towards women. The sixteenth century was a period of significant change as regards parental attitudes to daughters' education. The aim of parents, that they should bring up daughters to be wives and mothers able to fulfil the expectations of future marriage partners, encouraged them to provide some teaching for their daughters. These expectations will be examined in detail in Chapters Three and Four. Parental interest in girls' education was stimulated by a range of published materials which provided reading matter at a range of prices and manuals to assist parents in teaching their daughters themselves. Texts from both Catholic and Protestant authors indirectly and directly encouraged girls to read in order to develop interests which would enable them to become companions of their husbands.

From studying the intentions of parents in wills and letters, it is possible to reach an understanding of the term 'education' as it was applied to girls in the late sixteenth century. Education, as understood by most parents and writers of conduct books, was gendered. For girls it comprised three main elements: character formation, training in housewifely skills and book-learning. The first was often referred to by will-makers and parents as godly or virtuous bringing-up. No single definition of how much learning was desirable for girls can be made; much depended on the social status of the family, its wealth and the attitude of the parents to the role of women within the family. Some parents of the gentry included

---

” P K Guilday, 1914, p257. Figures derived from Guilday and Hamilton, 1904.



classical studies in their daughters' education; others thought that reading was sufficient for girls. For other parents with fewer resources, the level of education they could provide for their daughters was restricted, even if they had wished to educate them to an advanced level. The poorer will-makers stressed character formation and housewifely skills and less frequently learning. They were more likely than the gentry to specify reading rather than writing. Too few examples of the intentions of Catholic parents were found to be able to make direct comparisons between Protestant and Catholic intentions. Where comparable sources have been located, it suggests very similar attitudes towards girls' education.

The pattern of the provision of teaching for girls suggested by previous research has been confirmed by this study. For gentry girls, education took place almost entirely within the household, either their own or another where they had been sent by their parents. For daughters of poorer parents, some schooling was available, at the petty school level where they might be taught reading and housewifely skills.

## CHAPTER THREE

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MARRIAGE: PRESCRIPTIVE ADVICE AND PRACTICE .

In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, most parents saw the future of their daughters to be wives and later mothers. As Chapter Two showed, parental decisions regarding the upbringing of their daughters were made to prepare them for this future, although some might never marry. Historical demographers point to a high incidence of women remaining unmarried in this period; perhaps as many as one in six, however among girls of the gentry classes with attractive marriage portions, few would remain single. The importance of marriage in securing links with other families through the alliances made for their daughters, encouraged parents to make arrangements for them and it was difficult for women to operate successfully financially and socially outside marriage. For Catholic girls, there was a valid alternative to marriage and several hundred Catholic girls from landed backgrounds went abroad in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries to become nuns. Marriage conferred status on girls, and to be able to negotiate the best terms, it was important for parents, as Chapter Two showed, that their daughters should conform to the expectations of the parents of the intended husband.

This chapter will consider the main views of the prescriptive literature regarding the role of women within marriage and the question of how far this advice changed over the course of the sixteenth century. It will survey evidence of marriage negotiations appearing in personal correspondence, in order to establish the experience in practice of parental aspirations and expectations for daughters in marriage. It will then examine the personal correspondence to see how far husbands and wives conformed to the opinions of the advice books

regarding the authority of husbands, and companionship in marriage. Reasons for the breakdown of marriages will be considered as part of the study of marital relations. A broad survey of the activities of wives will be made in order to consider firstly, the role of women in marriage and secondly, the outcomes of education. Some aspects of women's activities after marriage will be explored in more detail in Chapter Six.

### The role of women in marriage: the theoretical position

This section gives an overview of the prescriptive literature in order to provide a comparative basis for the analysis of lived experience with particular reference to girls. The attitudes of the prescriptive conduct books towards marriage have been discussed at greater length in Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900*.<sup>1</sup>

### The purpose of marriage

Throughout the sixteenth century church authorities and conduct books were clear in their view of the purpose of marriage and set out their principles under three main headings:

#### The procreation of children

Children were welcomed and generally regarded with deep affection. So little was known about contraception, that the coming of children was almost inevitable: but they were still greeted with joy. Erasmus must have been commenting on what he noticed around him when he wrote 'what is it in younge babies that we dooe kysse so, we doe colle so, we dooe cherisshe so?'<sup>2</sup> As well as their importance for the future of the race, church and family, they were important to their parents for

---

<sup>1</sup> Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships 1500-1900*, London, Macmillan, 1994. See particularly Chapter 2, *The Prescriptive Family*.

<sup>2</sup> D Erasmus, *The Praise of folie*, Englished by Sir Thomas Chaloner, Knight, 1549, sig. B ii v.

the pleasure they would bring. Parents were reminded of their responsibilities to their children. Much space was given in conduct books to advice on the bringing up of children to be good Christians and responsible members of society. Thomas Becon referred to children as God's gift, and advised that parents should...

employ all their endeavours to traine them up even  
from theire verie cradels in good letters & in the  
knowledge of gods moste blessed wil...<sup>3</sup>

#### A remedy against sin

With the publication of humanist views of the desirability of marriage, the Reformation and the adoption of a married priesthood in the Church of England by 1558, the notion of celibacy lost its prominent position as a superior state. However, chastity and celibacy remained a central ~~pre~~<sup>pro</sup>ccupation of writers of conduct books. As late as 1609, William Perkins listed as his third aim of marriage the avoidance of fornication. He wrote, that marriage was 'to subdue and slake the burning lusts of the flesh.'<sup>4</sup>

#### Mutual companionship and friendship

From William Harrington's *Commendacions of matrymony* which first appeared in 1515, conduct books stressed the importance of mutual solace and support within marriage even though it was not seen as an equal partnership. This purpose also appeared in the marriage service. A wife was to honour and obey her husband, but his authority was not to be tyrannical. His position in the household was compared with Christ's authority over the Church. Within this unequal relationship there could still be friendship and companionship. The conduct books, with their emphasis on a wife's deference and

---

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Becon, *The governance of vertue*, 1566, Preface, sig. A 4 v.

<sup>4</sup> William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie; A short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering a family*, 1609, p14; included in Vol. III, *Collected Works*, 3 Vols. 1612, p671.

obedience, her duties and responsibilities in the house and restrictions on her movements outside make rather bleak reading, unless tempered by the advice regarding companionship. Philip Stubbes' wife Katherine who died aged 18 in childbirth was commended by her husband as a shining example to all young women. He wrote her story in 1591, explaining that she never contradicted him, but would rather 'by wise counsaile, and politicke advice, with all humilitie and submission, seeke to perswade him.' Her time was spent reading the Bible or some other good book, 'and when she was not reading, shee would spend her time in conferring, talking and reasoning with her husband of the word of God and of Religion.'<sup>5</sup>

### Marriage negotiations

Marriage arrangements were important to the whole family at all social levels and their significance was recognised in the clear advice given by the conduct books.<sup>6</sup> Children, because of filial duty and obedience, should be ruled by their parents in the choice made for them. At the same time, parents should consider the best interests of their child and make an appropriate choice of spouse, having regard to age, religious belief and social and economic background. For a marriage to be valid it had to have the consent of both parents and child.<sup>7</sup>

### Conduct within marriage

---

<sup>5</sup> Philip Stubbes, *A christall glasse for christian women*, 1591, sig. A 2 v and A 3 r. See also Sir Kenelm Digby on his wife Venetia, discussed in Caroline Bowden, 'Venetia Digby ... a perfect wife?' in ed. Ann Sumner, *Death, Passion and Politics: Van Dyck's Portraits of Venetia Stanley and George Digby*, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1995, pp37-44.

<sup>6</sup> These views are typically expressed in H Bullinger, *The christen state of matrimonye*, 1541, iv r; and William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 1609, Chapter 13.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of marriage arrangements see R Houlbrooke, 1984, Chapter 4, and Diana O'Hara 'Ruled by my friends': aspects of marriage in the diocese of Canterbury, c.1540-1570, *Continuity and Change* 6 (1), 1991, pp9-41.

Throughout the sixteenth century the general view of marriage among the writers of prescriptive literature, both Catholic and Protestant, was the view laid down in the marriage service combining respect for the authority of the husband with mutual friendship.\* The elements of continuity in sixteenth-century advice on marriage were clearly demonstrated by Kathleen Davies. She suggested that the change in attitude towards marriage and the increasing support for the idea of companionship predates the Reformation and was a gradual process over the century. She considered that historians had tended to overlook the printed manuals on marriage published before Martin Luther wrote his.<sup>9</sup>

A consideration of humanist marriage advice given in England confirms her view. Thomas More, in what Ballard describes as an 'elegant Latin poem', advised a friend that if he sought a happy life, he should overlook wealth and beauty and marry a woman of virtue and knowledge.

May you meet with a wife who is not always stupidly silent, nor always prattling nonsense! May she be learned, if possible, or at least capable of being made so... You will find in her an even, chearful, good-humoured friend, and an agreeable companion for life. She will infuse knowledge into your children with their milk, and from their infancy train them up to wisdom. Whatever company you are engaged in, you will long to be at home and retire with delight from the society of men into the bosom of one who is so dear, so knowing and so amiable.<sup>10</sup>

More's view of an educated wife being a more pleasurable companion than an ignorant one, can also be found in Erasmus' work.

---

\* For a fuller analysis of the prescriptive literature see Kenneth Charlton, 1988, and Alison Wall, 1990.

<sup>9</sup> K M Davies, 1981.

<sup>10</sup> George Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain*, Edition used: Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1985, pp 85-6.

Erasmus, although celibate himself, appears in his writing to have had a fair understanding of the human condition. He, like More, presented marriage as a very desirable state. If 'the wyves love is with no falsite corrupted...your felycyte is doubled... yf ye tary at home ther is at hand [that] whyche shall dryve away the tedyousnes of solytary beyng.' She will 'kysse you when ye departe, long for you when ye be absent, receyve you joyously when ye returne' and be 'A swete companion of youth, a kynd solas of age.'<sup>11</sup> The prologues written by translators of his books into English over the course of the sixteenth century, refer to the enthusiasm with which they were received. He also wrote books of practical advice in the vernacular for married couples. Amongst his writings were homely, informal versions of Platonic dialogue designed to give advice on domestic relationships. A *mery Dialogue declaring the proper types of shrowde shrewes and honest wyves* offered a female readership advice on how to win back an erring husband and prevent him from straying in the future. Eulalia and Rantippa discussed what wives should do to hold the interest of their husbands, comparing the process with lion or elephant taming: both women considered it to be the role of the wife to soothe and appease her husband.<sup>12</sup>

It was not only in England that humanist advice praising married love was published. Susan Johnson noted a German marriage book of 1472, Albrecht von Eyb's *Ehebuchlein*, which discussed problems of married life in simple language for all who could read.<sup>13</sup> The popularity of this book (twelve editions were published before 1540), which appeared before the publication of Luther's advice on marriage in 1522, led Susan Johnson to reconsider the originality of Luther's advice to

---

<sup>11</sup> D Erasmus, *In prayse of matrimony*, trans. Richard Tavernour, 1536, sig. C vii r and v.

<sup>12</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The praise of folie. Morae Encomium*. Englisshed by Sir T Chaloner, 1569. A *mery dialogue, declaringe the propertyes of shrowde shrewes, and honest wyves*. 1557.

<sup>13</sup> Susan Johnson, Luther's Reformation and (Un)holy Matrimony, *Journal of Family History*, Vol. 17, No.3, 1992, p277.

married couples.<sup>14</sup> Her article argued that Luther's beliefs effected little change in marriage practice in Europe, although he wrote extensively on the subject, fostering the concept of marriage as a 'school for character.' Marriage for Katharina, Luther's wife, meant a prodigious amount of housework, producing meals for the family and the large number of boarders, using money which she largely managed herself, while at the same <sup>time</sup> Luther disparaged women's intellect in his writing. Johnson concluded that Luther's view of marriage was patriarchal and traditional. The Lutheran church continued the traditional male priesthood and excluded women from lay-preaching: a woman's spiritual role was to be at home in the family.<sup>15</sup>

The increasing emphasis on companionship and friendship has implications for a study of girls' education. If wives were to be more knowledgeable companions they should be educated. Humanists' support for reading in the vernacular, together with their praise of marriage and stress on the importance of educating wives and mothers, was a significant development in the history of girls' education in the sixteenth century. Many parents could contemplate providing the basic skills necessary for reading in the vernacular if that would make their daughters more marriageable. In the work of writers such as Retha Warnicke and D'arne Welch, the classical element of humanist scholarship has drawn attention away from the shorter, more popular works of Erasmus, which had a significant impact once they were translated into the vernacular and were more widely available.<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that Miles Coverdale translated both the Catholic Erasmus and

---

<sup>14</sup> Martin Luther, *Sermon on married life*, 1522.

<sup>15</sup> In England, William Perkins, stated explicitly that even if there were no men for the job, women were not to be allowed to preach. He did allow them to teach at home, indeed in the absence of the husband, it was a wife's duty to teach the children. William Perkins, *Collected Works*, 1613, Vol. III p314.

<sup>16</sup> Retha Warnicke, 1983, Introduction; D'arne Welch, 1984, pp241-3.



the Reformer, Bullinger into English.<sup>17</sup> This is an indication of the fluidity of religious opinion in the middle of the sixteenth century. Historians of the Reformation in England have shown that popular religious belief did not change as quickly as the legislation prescribed, and translations of Erasmus' works continued to be published after the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity of 1559.<sup>18</sup>

Over the course of the sixteenth century, the conduct books continued to advocate a patriarchal marriage structure with wives who were to be subordinate, deferent and obedient to their husbands. The only exception allowed to a wife was if her husband required her to go against her duty to God and worship against her conscience to the danger of her immortal soul.<sup>19</sup> However, within a patriarchal structure much of the advice given supported the notion of friendship and companionship in marriage.<sup>20</sup> In Thomas Bentley's three volume work of 1582, *The Monument of Matrones*, written for women, he gave them practical and spiritual advice on how to lead a virtuous life. For example, the prayer written for a wife asked for grace to...

walke worthie of my vocation, to [ac]knowledge my husband to be my head, to be subject unto him, to learne thy blessed word of him, to reverence him, to obeie him, to please him, to be ruled by him,

---

<sup>17</sup> Coverdale translated both the 1545 *Enchiridion* of Erasmus and Bullinger's *The Christen state of matrimonye* of 1541.

<sup>18</sup> For an examination of the Protestant family see Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England*, London, Macmillan, 1988. While he conceded that there were elements of continuity, he still maintained that it had recognisable features of its own. Gerd Baumann refers to the popular image of the period in which Protestantism, and soon afterwards post-Tridentine Catholicism, exalted the faithful to practise reading Holy Writ, thereby encouraging literacy. ed. Gerd Baumann, *The Written Word: Literacy in transition*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985, p5.

<sup>19</sup> See for example, Thomas Becon, *Catechism*, 1543, p341; Richard Greenham, *A treatise of contract before marriage*, 1599, p292.

<sup>20</sup> William Gouge lays emphasis on the duties a husband can expect of his wife, *Workes of William Gouge*, (2 Vols.) 1627, and *Of domestical duties eight treatises*, 1622; William Whately, *Bride bush*, combines both elements. Collinson, 1988, pp71-2.

peacablie and quietlie to live with him....alwaie to use such cloathing as becommeth a sober, chaste and christian woman, circumspectlie and warelie to looke to my houshold...<sup>21</sup>

Edward Dering, in 1590, even advised a woman correspondent to bear with an unkind husband and show fortitude as part of her Christian duty.<sup>22</sup> The few women writers of advice books themselves accepted in print the concept of an unequal marriage and largely followed the advice of male conduct book writers. For example, Dorothy Leigh, having advised her sons on how to choose a wife, and the importance of considering her character and upbringing, counselled them to bear with the woman as with a weaker vessel; 'Here God sheweth, that it is her imperfection that honoreth thee, and that it is thy perfection that maketh thee to beare with her.'<sup>23</sup> Echoing the views expressed in earlier conduct books, she argued that husbands had responsibilities as heads of families, and they must continue to love their wives.

As heads of households, husbands' power over their wives was not to be abused: marriage was compared with Christ's relationship with the Church. Sternness was to be tempered with forbearance and understanding of a wife's weakness. Husbands were to love their wives and to provide for them and they were responsible for the spiritual welfare of the whole household.<sup>24</sup> For those unable to read, the advice could be heard regularly in sermons and homilies which reiterated the message.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrones*, 1582, Vol.III, p68.

<sup>22</sup> Edward Dering, *Certaine godly and verie comfortable Letters*, 1590.

<sup>23</sup> Dorothy Leigh, *The mothers blessing*, 1627, p54.

<sup>24</sup> Dorothy Leigh, 1627.

<sup>25</sup> See for example, R Valerie Lucas, *Puritan Preaching and the Politics of the Family*, in eds. Haselkorn and Travitsky, 1990, pp224-40.

The conduct books were united in their view of the tasks a wife was expected to perform. She was responsible for running the household, ensuring that the family was fed and clothed. She was expected to be frugal and careful in her spending in order to manage within the budget set by her husband. A wife should never be idle, but always busy with some mending or household task. Wives were advised to be like snails, always at home, in order to preserve modesty and chastity. Charitable works were commended as suitable occupations, with the agreement of their husbands. Some writers did concede that reading a religious book was a satisfactory occupation if there was no housework left to do.<sup>26</sup>

There was little fundamental change in the advice being printed between the middle of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, although it could be argued that the emphasis on parental responsibility for the upbringing of children found in many conduct books, served to strengthen the bonds between husbands and wives. The elements of continuity in the advice on marriage from the humanist advice through to the books of the early seventeenth century are clearly visible.

The theoretical position of women as inferior subordinates was reinforced by the law. The common law courts failed to recognise married women as legal entities in their own right and denied their ability to own property, although women were able to act and were successful in the ecclesiastical and equity courts. The law thus promoted the authority and financial power of men over women, and made it more difficult for women to contest court actions. Vivienne Larminie, in her study of the Newdigate family, found that women had security for financial arrangements affecting them at law and that in the case of a dispute, for example over a jointure, they could

---

<sup>26</sup> See for example, Heinrich Bullinger, *The christen state of matrimony*, 1541, plxiiii r; Thomas Becon, *Christen booke of matrimony*, 1546, plxxviii v&r; Catechism, 1844 ed., pp340-6; Nicholas Breton, *An olde man's lesson*, 1605; William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 1609, Chapter 12.

expect satisfaction. Evidence from other families, where widowed mothers found themselves in dispute with sons or stepsons over the payment of jointures, suggests that this was not always the case and some disputes dragged on for years.<sup>27</sup> Only single women or widows could trade as 'feme sole': married women could act with their husbands. They would not be entitled to a share in the business as a reward for their labours; any arrangement was dependent on the goodwill of the husband. The only property to which a woman was entitled after marriage was her jointure, payable on widowhood. The amount was agreed at the time of the marriage contract and depended on what her parents had been able to negotiate. In London, it was generally reckoned to be one third of the value of the property if there were surviving children.

The prescriptive writers of the sixteenth century were broadly agreed on the characteristics desirable in a wife and on her place in the family. Her subordinate position was mitigated by the companionship and friendship that many of the writers advocated as an important part of the married relationship and the duties and responsibilities her husband had towards her.

### The role of women in marriage: the practice

An analysis of the role of women within gentry families can be made from the personal letters that still remain. Wherever possible in this section, the sources quoted are from women. Male documents are quoted in order to qualify the female point

---

<sup>27</sup> Amy Louise Erickson, 1993, p5. Vivienne Larminie, *Marriage and the Family: the example of the seventeenth-century Newdigates*. *Midland History* Vol IX, 1984, pp1-22. Serious disputes over money occurred in the following cases; between Margaret Trevor and her son Sir John Trevor II in 1630s. ESRO, GLYnde 562, 563. After Nathaniel Bacon's death, his widow Dorothy was in dispute until the end of her life with her son Owen Smith and Nathaniel Bacon's daughters and grandchildren over Nathaniel's management of the profits he received from the lands of his stepsons: The letters and will of Lady Dorothy Bacon, 1597-1629, ed. Jane Key, *Norfolk Record Society*, Vol. LVI, 1991, pp78-9. At Montacute in 1638 Bridget Phelps and her two daughters were left impoverished by the death of her husband Sir Robert. He had made over lands to his son on his marriage and there was too little to provide for the women of the family. BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court, AC/C56/1, 57/2, 56/2, 57/5, 54/4, 56/5.

of view or where they give insights into women's roles in marriage.

### Marriage negotiations

The age at which women married and set up home has been the subject of some controversy. It was influenced by several factors: of particular importance was family wealth. Historians have shown that the average age at marriage in the sixteenth century was 25 or 26 for women, but amongst the landed classes it tended to be much younger, with some arrangements being made when the parties involved were both children.<sup>28</sup> The spouses did not, in these circumstances, generally live together as man and wife until several years after the ceremony, and indeed the husband's education and Grand Tour could take place while his wife remained behind. The necessity of gathering a dowry could delay marriage for a woman, and the difficulty of raising the requisite funds was recognised by employers who often left contributions to faithful servants in their wills. The age at which marriages were contracted has implications for a study of marriage negotiations. Where the young people concerned were still in their early teenage years, parents were more likely to be able to secure their compliance and expected obedience to their wishes. Where the parties were older, for example in their early-twenties, and had more experience of the world, parents could expect opposition if they failed to take sufficient notice of the wishes of the contracting parties. In the landed

---

<sup>28</sup> See Anderson, 1984, p18. For an example of aristocratic marriage see Elizabeth Tanfield, who was married aged 15 by her father to Sir Harry Cary, but continued to live at her father's house for over a year, because she was so young. After that time when her husband left for Holland, his mother subsequently insisted on Elizabeth coming to live with her. MS Life of Lady Falkland, Archives du Departement du Nord, Lille 20 E:9 ff3v, 4r. Grace, Lady Mildmay married at 15. Florence Poulett was 15 when she married Tom Smyth in 1627. Arrangements were made for Anne Clifford to marry when she was 15, although the marriage did not take place until she was 19. Anne Fitton aged 12 married John Newdigate aged 16 in 1587. Agnes Throckmorton wrote to Mr Gawdy to postpone the match they were discussing between her daughter and his son because she was not ready for it 'not for hir age onely but the litlenes of grothe and the oneaptenes I doe finde in hir to matche with anye...' B L Egerton MS 2,713 f144.

families of this study, marriage arrangements were frequently discussed for girls in their mid-teens and parents carried a heavy responsibility for making the decisions.

Indications of the intentions and expectations of parents for the marriages of their daughters appear in the letters relating to marriage settlements, in personal documents and contemporary accounts. The character of the father and his attitude towards his children as well as the financial situation of the family, were key elements in determining the detail of the marriage settlements.<sup>29</sup> In the worst situations the young people were pawns in a business deal. For example, in 1616 Sir Edward Coke, Lord Chief Justice kidnapped his daughter Frances, aged 15, from his estranged wife's house, and forced her, against her and her mother's wishes to marry John Villiers, brother of the Duke of Buckingham. He was said to have used physical violence against the girl to gain her compliance. Anxious about his own position at Court, he wished to ingratiate himself with a family rising in political influence. At the opposite end of the scale, fathers took into account the opinions of their daughters, and some were prepared even to break off plans at the last minute if their daughters were unhappy. Katherine Cholmley should have married Lord Lumley and her father, Sir Richard, had already paid £1000 as part of her portion. On the day before the wedding, Katherine fell on her knees and begged her father not to marry her to a lord whom she did not love. He replied 'Rather than marry thee against thy liking, I will lose my money.' Katherine had fallen in love with a singing and dancing teacher named Dutton, a younger son from a gentry family.<sup>30</sup> The majority of cases lay somewhere in between the two. Most negotiations reached a satisfactory conclusion with the

---

<sup>29</sup> For an example of a family where financial considerations were paramount; see the negotiations in the Wynn family of Gwydir, analysed in Heal and Holmes, 1994, pp64-8.

<sup>30</sup> For the Coke marriage see; D N B entry for John Villiers; and Laura Norsworthy, *The Lady of Bleeding Heart Yard*, London, John Murray, 1935. For the marriage of Katherine Cholmley; see *Memoirs of Sir Hugh Cholmley*, Privately Printed, 1787, pp8-9.

parents considering the character of the proposed partner as well as his social standing and financial resources. Girls, on the whole, deferred to their parents even if it was with resignation rather than joy.<sup>31</sup>

The lessons of obedience as part of character formation were effectively taught by most parents. Few girls would have had the boldness of Anne Hampden to break off a match. Her uncle arranged a marriage which...

came so neere to conclusion that all the articles were agreed, and the wedding clothes made, but when yt came to the upshot, the gentlewoman had no maner of liking, nor could by any meanes be persuaded which so displeased her uncle, that he left her worse by £10,000 than he meant to have don, which doth in no whit grieve her in respect that she hath her choice.<sup>32</sup>

In the end she married the man of her choice, Sir John Trevor. Anne was not conforming to the expected behaviour pattern for girls in breaking the agreement made by her uncle. It was expected that the wishes of the young people concerned would be met before a marriage was agreed and that without them the marriage could not proceed, but it was a different matter to end an agreement once it was made.<sup>33</sup>

The details of marriage negotiations are well illustrated by a letter to Sir William Ingleby from his friend Mr Pitt advising him of a suitable candidate for his hand. It is worth quoting at length because it brings together the most important elements of successful arranged marriages and illustrates the kind of daughter parents wanted to raise.

---

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, the letter from Elizabeth Phelps, BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court Papers, AC/C56/1, 1638.

<sup>32</sup> Glynde Place Archives, a catalogue, ed. R F Dell, Lewes, East Sussex County Council, 1964, pxxiii; citing McClure ed. Letters of John Chamberlain, 1939, Vol. II, p210.

<sup>33</sup> For the expectations of parents, see Linda Pollock, 1989; and Chapter 2 above.

There is one that providence offers whose godlyness, parontage, person [is] without exception and though not a lords daughter yet her grandfather a knight, he and her father of great esteem among the old puritans and in the cuntry where they live. I am well acquainted with the person. and have ground to beelieve shee is really godly and an experienced christian and a very good huswife and affects the cuntry where shee may bee serviceable to her generation. Her age is one and twenty. Shee hath been much in my thoughts for you beefore. I only feared her portion, but of late the death of some who hath added to her portion three thousand pound beesides some possibilitiyes wich may bee fall her. The Lord direct and make you serious herein and though I deserve not soe much yet take heed you neglect not the providence lest you never have the like offer...<sup>34</sup>

The elements of the negotiations which were of most concern to the family here and seen in other correspondence can be analysed under four main headings;

#### The family background

The unnamed candidate did not have a title to match that of Sir William, although her grandfather did. The social spheres in which they moved would thus be compatible and there would be the possibility of mutually beneficial family network links.

#### Religion and character

The candidate was a religious girl who, it was assumed, would have the moral characteristics which accompany piety; obedience, chastity and quietness. Ingleby's attention was drawn to the fact that the family was of the older Puritan persuasion, implying that there was nothing new-fangled and over-enthusiastic about her religious practice. This was of particular importance to Sir William as he came from a family where there were many Catholics.

---

<sup>34</sup> E Pitt to Sir William Ingleby, WYAS, Leeds, ING. 3542, c.1600.



### Skills and practical qualifications

The candidate was a very good housewife who would be able to manage her household effectively and efficiently. Housewifely skills were complex, especially in a large household where there were likely to be guests and considerable fluctuations in numbers. At Sir William's social level, considerable managerial skills were needed as well as practical experience of running a larder, providing food and keeping an orderly house. She also liked the country and so would not be discontented and pine for the excitement of town life. Mr Pitt considered that she would make friends with her neighbours.

### Financial settlement

The difference in the social background of the proposed partners had been overcome by the recent acquisition of money. A dowry of £3000 was a considerable one in a gentry family, and there is a hint of more to come. The size of the dowry was a crucial factor in determining the match that could be made; a family with sons and financial problems tried to improve the situation by judicious settlements. Mr Pitt hinted later on in the letter, that her parents considered religion of equal importance with money as they had been approached by 'a very godly gentleman' with an estate worth about a thousand pounds a year. They were considering him on religious grounds, although they acknowledged they might make an arrangement worth much more if religion were not an issue. Mr Pitt, acting as a marriage broker, had asked the parents for time to write to Sir William before they reached any final conclusion and he advised his friend to consider the matter seriously.

There was no direct mention of the word affection in the letter, although this was an important element in some other negotiations. There was, however, the underlying assumption that the good character of the girl was enough to make the arrangement satisfactory. It appears on the surface to be a rather cold financial transaction made out of necessity: Sir William's need for a wife and money and the parents' need for

a husband for their daughter. Mr Pitt invited Sir William to come and stay with him if he decided to proceed. This would give the opportunity to meet the girl before the marriage took place. It has to be remembered that this letter, the only one that survives about this arrangement, deals with the business part of what would become a much more complex process. Marriage needed the consent of both parties if it was to be recognised in the church courts. Unfortunately, there is no record in the family papers of what followed.

In another case, Mr John Whatton, a widower, finding life on his own very uncomfortable, decided in 1639 to take a wife. His approach was, like Mr Pitt's very practical, but he did include affection as an important element. He considered a dozen or more candidates and finally chose a young woman of 25, Katherine Babington. This following extract, with its emphasis on the desirable characteristics of the girl, is a clear indication of how important it was for parents to make sure their daughters conformed to the expectations of the intended husband and his family.

She is comended to be verie meeke, humble, and one that will be suteable to my conditions....she hath made as great show in her words and cariage to me and others that she can affect me, and will carrie herselfe in such a loveing manner as is fittinge as I can desire... and that was it which I aymed at rather than greatness of birth, friends or portion, she being one that feareth God, and is of verye good report.<sup>35</sup>

Having assured himself of his future wife's good character and her favourable attitude towards him, John Whatton was less concerned about the financial benefits his wife would bring him, and more anxious for contentment and companionship in his future marriage. Many parents making marriage agreements for their daughters tried, by making enquiries about possible matches, to ensure that emotional warmth could grow by satisfying themselves about the character of the man

---

<sup>35</sup> John Whatton to Sir William Herrick, Bodleian, MS ENG HIST C476 f64, August 2 1639.

concerned.

The well-being of the whole family was a significant factor in both the Ingleby and Whatton negotiations and is reflected in other correspondence of the period. It was not only the young couple who had to be considered.<sup>36</sup> As the Ingleby negotiation showed, the transaction could link a family into a valuable support network. On the other hand, family circumstances could have a detrimental influence on the choice of partner, regardless of the parents' view of marriage. The pressure imposed by the determination to use marriage arrangements to obtain relief from severe financial difficulties, made for some unfortunate choices of partner. In the Wynn of Gwydir family, the number of attempted marriage negotiations for the eldest son John was unusually high. John Wynn senior, was determined that any arrangement should be financially advantageous. Nevertheless, even he recognised the importance of affection between the young couple. The difficulty of discussing affection with a virtually unknown potential marriage partner, can be judged from the following extract. In response to a letter from young John Wynn, Bridget Grey, one of a series of unsuccessful candidates in marriage gave a pragmatic response to young John's approach.

If woemen should value mens affections by their words then woeng and speakeng might still goe togeather. For myne owne part as I have no caues to distrust the sinceritie of your protestacion as have I little reason to bee too credulous knoeng that the children of wisdom are slow of beleef...I can not justlie ranke your selfe yeat may you err in your affections as well as other men, but becaues my pen is not powerfull enough to discover such errors it shall give an end to thease cribled lines...<sup>37</sup>

Eventually young John married another candidate Margaret Cave, but it is hinted that he travelled abroad extensively because

---

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, the letter from Sir George Goring to Sir Arthur Ingram, WYAS, Leeds TN C II 244, 1627.

<sup>37</sup> Bridget Grey to young John Wynn, NLW, Wynn of Gwydir Papers No. 333, 1605.

he was unhappy with his wife.<sup>38</sup>

Although both conduct books and parents in their letters made it clear that they expected their children only to marry with parental consent, some marriages were arranged secretly. In the collections of papers studied, two marriages were undertaken without the consent of parents.<sup>39</sup> At the other extreme, there were, in the period studied, parents who ignored the advice of the conduct books and arranged matches on behalf of the children concerned without consulting them. For example, a marriage between the daughter of Bishop Chaderton and the son of Thomas Broke was made when the two were children. It had to be reconfirmed in 1586 when she was 12 and her husband was 14. At that point, Johanna Broke signed to say that she agreed to the marriage. In another case, a comment was made in a document in the Wynn collection on the case of an uncle with financial problems who virtually sold his orphaned nieces in marriage.<sup>40</sup> The young girls in aristocratic and gentry families where arrangements were made for them in their early teens, would have found it very difficult to express any independent views on the choice of marriage partner to their parents.

One of the constant factors seen in the marriage negotiations whether they were being made by parents or widowers, was the emphasis on the character of the future wife. She should be of good character, prepared to accept the authority of her husband, respect him and be a good manager of the household

---

<sup>38</sup> NLW, Wynn of Gwydir Papers, see, for example, Nos. 458, 474, 492, 611, 658 and 667.

<sup>39</sup> Katherine Beaumont married Antony Byron secretly. Her father spent some time trying to clear his daughter's good name; ESRO, ASHEBURNHAM 839, c.1590. Thomas Moore wrote to his father-in-law to try and explain why he had married his daughter without obtaining consent; WYAS, TN/C II/23, 1623. In another case, Kenelm Digby married Venetia Stanley secretly, because he was afraid that his mother would disinherit him once the marriage became public. He only agreed to announcing it when Venetia was pregnant with their second child and he was on the point of going abroad. K Digby, *Private Memoirs*, 1827 and 1828, and ed. V Gabrieli, *NLW Journal*, Vol. IX, Winter 1955, No. 2, p125.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Draper, *The House of Stanley*, Ormskirk, 1864, pp60-1. NLW, Wynn of Gwydir, No 334, 1605.

and in time a mother able to set an example to her children and the servants.<sup>41</sup> Education was rarely mentioned in the documents drawn up at the time as a specific requirement.

Marriage arrangements for widows were very similar to those for girls, although in theory they had more control over their own future. For many, the question of re-marriage was a difficult one; if they had sufficient funds to live comfortably on their own and the ability to manage their property, the prospect of remaining single was attractive. A number of women in landed families remained widows for many years and were the centre of family activities, helping to bring up grandchildren, advising adult children and successfully managing their own affairs.<sup>42</sup> The future for widows with little or no property of their own and no confidence in their management abilities was very different. Remaining single in these circumstances was not desirable. Family circumstances placed additional constraints on their ability to remarry. For a widow with only a small jointure and several young children, it was more difficult to find another husband. Even though in theory a widow was free to make her own choice of marriage partner, a young, wealthy widow with no children attracted attention from fortune-seekers, and as a result, her increased freedom to choose a husband was

---

<sup>41</sup> See also Anne Bacon to her son Roger, B L Add MS 63,081 f132, 1619, and Elizabeth Leighton to her brother, Sir John Wynn, NLW, Wynn of Gwydir, No. 799, 1617.

<sup>42</sup> There are a number of examples of widows remaining at the centre of family life. Lady Joan Barrington of Hatfield was a widow for 13 years, the focus of much family activity. B L Egerton MS 2,645 consists of letters sent to Lady Joan on both business and family matters. Lady Abigail Moundeford and Lady Meryell Bell in the Knyvett family both rejected the advice of a nephew that they remarry. They corresponded for more than twenty years, discussing a variety of topics. In 1649, Lady Moundeford referred to 'that horrid acte of sundaring our good King' and commented on the horrors of the civil wars, 'ther is like to be a most terable fight... preserve them which fight for the kinge.' B L Add MS 27,400 especially ff28 and 31. Lady Lettice Offaly, daughter of the Earl of Kildare, remained a widow managing her estates in England and Ireland for 40 years; see for example, NUL, Clifton Cl C 352, 1632, and B L Sloane MS 3,827 f77, 1626. Anne Newdigate as a widow for 8 years supervised the estate and farming on behalf of her young son in order to preserve his inheritance; Vivienne Larmine, 1984, p16. Anne, Countess of Arundel after her husband's death in the Tower became a devoted grandmother. B L Add MS 64,875 ff92, 106, 111-3, 128, 162, Add MS 64,876 ff21 and 23.

relative. In the case of the newly widowed Margaret Devereux, an heiress to lands in Yorkshire in 1591, there were two candidates within a fortnight. Intense lobbying from sponsors of candidates took place, with the unsuccessful suitor, Sir Thomas Hoby, having to wait his turn until the lady was widowed a second time in 1596. Lady Margaret Hoby was, in theory at least, able to decide for herself whom she would marry, but the number of great men involving themselves in the affair and the threat of a Chancery suit after her second husband's death, hardly made it a free choice. The Hoby marriage begun under such pressure seems to have brought her some pleasure: Lady Margaret wrote affectionately to her quarrelsome and litigious husband and kept a diary of how she spent her time at Harkness.<sup>43</sup>

Although some marriage arrangements were concluded before the couple had a chance to become well acquainted, there is evidence in other cases, of courtships taking place before marriage where the literacy of the woman permits a greater understanding of women's attitudes towards marriage. An example of this can be seen in the correspondence relating to the marriage of the Earl and Countess of Bath. Alexander Colles, steward to the Earl, acted as a go-between for him with Lady Margaret Long, a widow; he delivered letters and interpreted his employer's opinions to Lady Long. In 1547 Colles wrote to her explaining that he had delivered her letter to the Earl;

which he dyd receive with much gentelness, gave you great thanks that it now pleased you to take the pains to write yourself....Madam I hear greatt praise given unto you for your wysdom, that ye have so provyded for yourself...<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> For the full story of Lady Margaret Hoby's second and third marriages, see the Preface to the Fortescue Papers, ed. S R Gardiner, *Camden Society*, New Series 1, 1871, and ed. D M Meads, *Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, London, Routledge, 1930.

<sup>44</sup> Alexander Colles to Lady Margaret Long, CUL, Hengrave 88 Vol. I No. 10, 1547; printed in Gage, 1822, pp121-3.

The marriage, judging by the later affectionate correspondence between husband and wife, was a happy one, where there were many shared interests. Colles made a point of commenting on the fact that Lady Long had written the letter herself. He had made enquiries about her character to ascertain her suitability as a wife, and been told about her wisdom. Margaret supervised the Hengrave estate in the absence of her husband, and took great interest in the upbringing of her step-children. The family at Hengrave maintained their Catholicism throughout the period. The extensive collection of personal documents means that family relationships can be examined and they illustrate a variety of marital experiences.

#### The relationship between husband and wife after marriage

Although there was distrust of romantic love as the basis of marriage, it was hoped that mutual love would develop afterwards. It is difficult to define what contemporaries thought this meant, since style and terminology in letters between husbands and wives varies from the very formal, to the informal using of pet names and private language. Some husbands wrote passionate letters expressing pleasure in the company of their wives and a strong desire to see them. Wives too, wrote letters describing their longing to see their husbands, and their love for them. When analysing the contents of the letters, we have to take into account the difficulty of expressing feelings on paper when writing skills may not be very secure.

The experience of marriage found in correspondence and personal documents of the period varied from the formal and distant to affectionate and even passionate. Evidence of this range of emotions can be found in personal documents and letters from women as well as from men. Lady Grace Mildmay referred in her memoirs to the 'reverent respect' she owed her husband. There are no letters to her husband surviving and the formal relationship she described appears to be much closer to

the model advocated by the conduct books. A similar relationship can be seen in the letter Thomas Matteson wrote to his brother John in 1612, telling him of his marriage. 'It hath pleased god, that I have takine to wife Elizabeth Kingrosse, who, I thank god, doth shewe her selfe a dutefull wife to me and nothings shorte in all dutye and good respecte to all our freinds which is noe smale comfort to me.'<sup>45</sup>

A few men in their letters to their wives, reflected a similar attitude emphasising the respect and deference due to them as head of the family. John Cheke, the Protestant Greek scholar, wrote to his wife, Mary, explaining what he found unacceptable in her behaviour and how she should improve.

I beare manye things with you whiche I like not, and yet I tell you nothing of them because I would rather you should do things of yourselfe then by rebuke...I see in you that you have a strong affection and a weake reason...

He said that when she put away childishness 'than will I have that opinion of you that becommeth an honest husband to have of a discreete wyfe' In his next letter, he discussed his feelings for her and wrote, explaining his position: 'This will I saye that my love toward you, growith out of an honest dutye & with honestie and dutie I will kepe it toward you and do looke for no lesse at your hand.'<sup>46</sup> Cheke went to Italy after being released from the Tower in 1553 and continued to write to Mary in a similar admonitory way; there are no records of Mary's replies, so it is not known how she received his advice.

The emotional distance seen in Cheke's letters is present in few of the letters between husbands and wives in the present

---

<sup>45</sup> Lady Grace Mildmay, *Memoirs*, Northampton Central Library, p81. Thomas Matteson to his brother John, WYAS, Leeds, Ingram Papers, TN/C 1/100, 1612.

<sup>46</sup> John Cheke to his wife Mary, B L Add MS 46,367, f10r and v, 1554.



study. Much more frequently there is warmth and affection between spouses. There are several series of letters from husbands in the collections studied, which indicate that affection, and in some cases enduring love, developed between marriage partners. These are to be found in marriages arranged by parents as well as those initiated by the partners. For example, Henry Earl of Bath wrote long letters to his wife Rachael in the 1630s. Correspondence in the Dering collection indicates that Sir Edward Dering loved both his second and third wives. Writing to Unton, his third wife, he used a pet name 'Numpes' and addressed her as 'my best and dearest freinde the Lady Dering.' John Coke, who became a naval Commissioner, wrote long letters to his wife, Mary, asking after her health, and for news about herself and the children. He gave her details of sermons he had heard and discussed estate matters. He often regretted the Court business which prolonged his absence from home. Percival Willoughby, whose marriage was arranged by his father, became very fond of his wife and wrote to her 'tho' my hands faint, my heart shall never fail, tho' pen and paper wast, my love and liking shall increase, and albeit my ink freese for cold, my good will in fervency shall fry.' Simonds Dewes writing to his wife as 'My deare sweetheart' wanted to make certain she was able to read the letter for herself and used a specially clear printed hand for two of his letters to her.<sup>47</sup>

Many women wrote affectionately to their husbands too, an indication that affection was, in many cases mutual. Like

---

<sup>47</sup> Henry Earl of Bath to Rachael, CKS, U 264 c267 1-21. Sir Edward Dering to his wife, Unton, CKS, U 275 Acc 951 C1, printed in *The Dering Love Letters*, compiled by Alison Cresswell, Maidstone, Kent County Council, 1994; John Coke to his wife Mary, B L Add MS 64,871 f78; 64,873 ff52, 56; 64,876 ff 65, 116, 157; 64,878 ffl, 48; 69,869 ff11-12, 23, 26, 30, 1612-24. Percival Willoughby to his wife Bridget, HMC Middleton MSS, 1911, pp556-9, 1580s. Simonds Dewes to his wife, B L Harleian MS 379 ff16 and 22. See also; Robert Sydney to his wife Barbara, B L Add MS 15,232 f45, 1592. Endymion Porter's letters to his wife printed in Dorothea Townshend, *The Life and Letters of Endymion Porter*, London, T Fisher Unwin, 1897, see pp17-25, 35-7, 48-58, 70 and 74-81. Sir Thomas Knyvett's letters to his wife Katherine 1620-1644 printed in ed. Bertram Schofield, *The Knyvett Letters*, Norfolk Record Society, Vol. XX, 1949.

their husbands they included family news, estate matters and local politics in their letters. For example; Lady Unton Dering, third wife of Sir Edward, concluding a letter containing a shrewd political assessment of the second election of 1640, wrote 'Deare Heart do not think so much and disturb thy sweet rest. I would I were in thine armes, for no place nor frend how deare soever can give me true content, when thou art not present. So preciously deare art thou.'<sup>48</sup> There are fewer letters extant from women, but from the affection evident in them, it seems likely that a lack of skill rather than any want of feeling, explains the paucity of examples from the women's side.

There is evidence of affectionate marriages even where the wife was illiterate. The letters from Joan Alleyn to her actor husband Edward, were written on her behalf by her stepfather Philip Henslowe. The letters exchanged in 1593 show that Edward was deeply fond of his wife, calling her 'my sweet mouse', Joan in turn referred to him as 'my well beloved sweete harte'.<sup>49</sup> Joan's social background was urban; her stepfather was a dyer by trade and Groom of the Chamber. Through her marriage to Edward Alleyn she moved into literary circles and earned herself a reputation for virtue, firmness of character and charity.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Lady Unton Dering to her husband, CKS, U 275 Acc 951 C 1/11. See also, for example; Maria Thynne to her husband Thomas, Alison Wall, 1982, p32, after 1604: Joan Herrick to Sir William, Bodleian MS ENG HIST C484 f18, undated, C476 f19, c.1613: Margaret, Countess of Bath, to the Earl her husband, CUL, Hengrave 88 Vol. I f22, undated c.1551: Lady Elizabeth Gage to her husband Edward, CUL, Hengrave 88 Vol. III f63, undated: Anne Twisden aged 54 to her husband, B L Add MS 34,173 f11, c.1628: Lady Sydney Wynn to her husband Sir John 1616, NLW, Wynn of Gwydir Nos. 739, 742, and 745: Katherine, Duchess of Buckingham to her husband, B L Harleian MS 6,987 ff117-121, undated c.1623 and PRO SP 16/67 Nos. 28 and 60; 16/68 No.3, 16/81 No. 5. 16/84 No.80, all 1627: Jane Maurice to her husband Sir William Maurice, NLW, Clenennau Papers, Nos. 215 in 1606, 217 in 1606, 364 in 1618.

<sup>49</sup> Correspondence between Edward and Joan Alleyn, Alleyn Papers, Dulwich College, MS1, ff10, 11, 11b, 13 and 52.

<sup>50</sup> S P Cerasano, *Edward Alleyn: 1566-1626*, in eds. Aileen Reid and Robert Maniura, *Edward Alleyn, Elizabethan Actor, Jacobean Gentleman*, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1994, p30.

In the collections studied, several series of loving letters from wives remain.<sup>51</sup> Florence Smyth of Ashton Court wrote to her husband Tom 'I have [s]carce gon to whole daye with dri eyes sence but I will asure you that it was not for any other cause but the want of your company...' One letter was addressed on the cover 'to my best frend'. The rest of the correspondence is just as affectionate, with news of the children and farming as well as good wishes for him. Mary Coke wrote frequently to her husband John, during his long absences from the family home in Shropshire. She reported on the development and health of the children from when they were tiny babies; she discussed estate business and the building of their new house, Hall Court; she reported on the education of their sons and she frequently referred to the love she felt for her husband and her regret at his absence. After Mary's death in childbirth in 1624, John Coke married Joan Gore, a widow from London. She too, wrote many letters to him. Her language is more formal than Mary Coke's, and while the correspondence is affectionate, it does not contain the depth of feeling evident in the letters between John and Mary. Much of the news in Joan's letters concerns the health of her own children, her step-children and her grandchildren. She spent long periods of time at Tottenham, near London, and was conscious of the dangers of the plague in the vicinity. Like Mary, she missed her husband during his absences and looked forward to meeting him. In the letters between 1639 and 1642, there are references to the tensions and disturbances caused by the intensifying conflict between King and Parliament.<sup>52</sup>

Brilliana Harley was a prolific correspondent to her husband

---

<sup>51</sup> Lettice Gawdy to her husband Framlingham, B L Add MS 27,395 ff134-157, 1620s. Florence Smyth to her husband Tom, BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court, AC/C60 1-22, 1630s. Anne, Countess of Middlesex to her husband Lionel, CKS, U269/1 CP 75, 9 letters, 1627-36. See also next footnote.

<sup>52</sup> BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court, Florence Smyth, AC/60 1 and 20, 1630-41. Mary Coke to her husband John, B L Add MS 64,874 f54; 64,878 ff20, 49, 104; 69,869 ff1-9, 13-21, 24, 28 and 32, 1605-24. Joan Gore to her husband, Sir John Coke, B L Add MS 69,869 ff34-76, 1636-42.

as well as to her son. She had an exalted view of marriage itself:

Mariag is the Holiest kind of companie in all the world: In so much as it is impossibel for a man to contract a marriage, without coupling himself with his wif, so as each bee made privie to others mind, will and purpose in all things.<sup>53</sup>

She wrote to her husband Robert frequently when he was in London attending parliament and sought his advice constantly. In 1626 she commented on the pleasure of writing letters to him 'I am so much pleased with this silent discoursing with you that as I spent part of the morning in this kinde of being with you, so nowe I begine the night with it, and in theas lines reseave the remembrance of my love of which you have not a part but all...' In 1641 after eighteen years of marriage she wrote; 'it is my greate joy that I have such a deare husband whoo I know will all wayes take care of your chilldern and myselfe.'<sup>54</sup>

The correspondence from wives to their husbands is significant on two levels. Firstly, it shows that many women in the gentry class were able to write their own letters to their husbands when they were separated and secondly, that many expressed deep affection. A comparison can be made between the experience of gentry marriages at the beginning of the seventeenth century with those of Leicestershire in the fifteenth century. Eric Acheson, as part of his study of the gentry, demonstrated that parents making marriage arrangements for their children 'showed little or no concern for the prospects of connubial happiness.' They were more concerned with the business transaction: attitudes found only in a minority of cases in the present study. He found little evidence which might indicate the warmth or otherwise of the

---

<sup>53</sup> Brilliana Harley, *Commonplace book*, NUL, Portland London MS, Pl Fm 5, p176.

<sup>54</sup> Brilliana Harley to her husband Robert, B L Add MS 70,110 unfoliated and 70,003 f177.

subsequent relationship.<sup>55</sup> The evidence from the late-sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries about marriage negotiations and subsequent marital relationships shows that there had been marked changes in the attitudes of parents towards marriage and in the quality of the relationship between husband and wife since the fifteenth century. The absence of correspondence between husbands and wives from fifteenth-century Leicestershire compared with the growing number of letters from the latter part of the sixteenth century onwards, suggests not only of greater companionship within marriage but also of increasing female literacy.

### Activities of wives

The purpose of this survey is to give an overview of wives' activities; some of these will be examined in more detail in Chapter Six. In practice as well as in theory, household management was the chief responsibility of a wife, and organising provisions and clothes for a large family could be onerous. The main tasks for women in the household changed very little over the course of the sixteenth century and could be carried out by non-literate wives. One major innovation during this period was the publication, in increasing numbers, of books of advice on household tasks, giving advice on how these might be carried out more effectively. Titles such as *The treasury of hidden secrets*, *The good huswives closet of provision*, and *Delights for ladies* were specifically aimed at women readers, as the prefaces made clear. They gave advice on a host of subjects including recipes for cooking and preserving food, making cosmetics, herbal remedies for common ailments, and for preparations needed in the household, such as polish and ink. These books were designed to expand the skills and competence of housewives able to manage more complex tasks.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Eric Acheson, *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century, c.1422-c.1485*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p159.

<sup>56</sup> John Partridge, *The treasury of hidden secrets*, 1591; *The good huswives closet of provision*, enlarged edition 1600. Sir Hugh Platt, *Delights for ladies, to adorne their persons, tables, closets and*

Lady Elinor Fettiplace c.1570-c.1647, who spent her married life in Appleton in Berkshire, made her own extensive collection of recipes for food, herbal remedies and household preparations. She included details about how to grow some of the vegetables and preserve them afterwards and added comments, for example on the heat for cooking necessary to make the recipes easier to use. By the time that the book of some 225 pages was copied out by a scribe in 1604, Elinor Fettiplace had at least two sons living and a household that included four generations of Fettiplaces. After it was completed, Elinor Fettiplace continued to make alterations and added details and marginal notes in her own hand. She had collected recipes from her neighbours and friends and included some much older items. The personal comments relating to the recipes and cooking process, demonstrate that Elinor Fettiplace took an active part in an extensive range of household management activities.<sup>57</sup>

Personal documents in other families indicate a similar level of household management skills among gentry women. Some wives took a strong personal interest in the paperwork associated with running a house. Between April 1563 and June 1564, Elizabeth Kytson, at Hengrave, signed the accounts every week except one, and in the inventory for 1617, there are many additions and alterations in her hand. Of Anne Twisden it was said that she 'knewe everything spent in it (the household) in so much that she list there should not bee an egge mist but that she would know it...' She wrote to her husband in 1628, explaining that it cost 3/= a week to keep one person, and that was the lowest possible cost. Ann Dering kept reminder notes of household tasks to be done. Sir John Oglander commented on the thriftiness of his wife who kept an impressive house on the Isle of Wight; she rose every day

---

*distillatories*, 1599.

<sup>57</sup> Hilary Spurling, *Elinor Fettiplace's Receipt Book: Elizabethan Country House Cooking*, London, Viking Salamander, 1986.

before him, in order that everything should be well done. She preferred to get her own shoes wet rather than trust the servants with the job. She was, according to her husband, as virtuous as she was hard-working.<sup>58</sup>

The absence of husbands from home, gave wives opportunities for developing and exercising management skills outside the confines of the household which would have been difficult without literacy. Evidence of the understanding they showed of good farming practice, how to negotiate tenancies, the financing of deals, the victualling of sometimes very large households, the supervising of young people boarding in their households and checking of accounts, can be seen in the private and estate papers of the period. For many wives it was not a question of being a cipher or token head, they made their own judgements about people and the timing of sales and purchases; they moved, borrowed or lent large sums in cash to pay for land.<sup>59</sup> The complexity of the management tasks undertaken by the women personally, organising households, estates and farming required education in order to read relevant documents and write their own letters. For others, the authority they were delegated by their husbands was circumscribed. They consulted their husbands regularly and sought permission before taking decisions. At the same time in their letters, wives recognised the limits of their

---

<sup>58</sup> CUL, Hengrave, Household Accounts 82/2, Inventory of effects 1617, 85. Notebook of Sir R Twisden, B L Add MS 34,163 f80, Anne Twisden to her husband, B L Add MS 34,173 f11. Ann Dering's notes, CKS U350 F4. Sir John Oglander, see ed. F Bamford, *A Royalist's Notebook: the commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander Knt of Nunwell 1622-52*, London, Constable, 1936, pp xxv-i, 250. For other examples of women auditing household accounts see; Anne Newdigate in WRO, Newdigate Papers, CR136/B548, 1608; Anne Clifford, who in some places, put extensive marginal notes, Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth/ Lady Anne's Account Book, 1665. I am grateful to Mary Prior for this reference.

<sup>59</sup> For women involved in estate management see for example; Ann Wen Brynckir to her brother Sir William Maurice, NLW, Calendar of Clenennau Papers, pp61, 92, 106, 109 and 129; Katherine Paston B L Add MS 27,447 f172; Ann Sprackling to her brother Oxinden, B L Add MS 27,999 f83. Margaret, Countess of Derby, in Coward, 1983, p35; Lettice Gawdy to husband Framlingham, B L Add MS 27,395 f134; Anne Throckmorton to her son, WRO, Throckmorton Papers, CR 1998, Box 60, Nos. 3 & 4 and Folder 1, No. 6.

authority.<sup>60</sup>

A number of women were active in family businesses; for example, in the London guilds as widows, when they took over on their husband's death. This suggests that as wives of members, they had already participated in the business and understood it. For example, in the Printers' Guild which permitted women to trade as widows, four of them maintained their businesses for two years or more in the late sixteenth century. The widow of R Wolfe continued his printing and bookselling business and in 1574 printed an English version of Calvin's *Institutions of the Christian faith*. In the same guild in 1556-9, Mistress Toye was taking apprentices and attending guild functions as the only woman present. Jane Yetsweirt was the patentee for law books between 1595 and 1597. Evidence of a woman actively involved in the family shipping business can be seen in the will of Christopher Langley, a merchant of Colchester. In 1601 he left his wife substantial portions of seven ships, much more than was customary and a share of the yards, sails and rigging. She was sole executrix and John, Langley's son, was asked to assist her in carrying on marine business after Langley's death.<sup>61</sup>

Dorothy Wadham is an example of a woman for whom there is no evidence of her activities while her husband was alive, but who became publicly active when, on his death he left instructions for his money to be used for the foundation of a college at Oxford. She took charge of the project personally. Dorothy Wadham was 79 when she became a widow; she was Catholic and she took seriously the trust given her by her husband to oversee the establishing of the College from the beginning. By the time she died in 1618, Wadham College was functioning; she had appointed Fellows and made

---

<sup>60</sup> For an example of this, see the letters of Joan Thynne to her husband, in ed. A Wall, 1982, letters No. 21-24, pp12-16.

<sup>61</sup> Edward Arber, *List of 837 London Publishers 1553-1640*, 1890. F G Emmison, 1978, p294.



recommendations for scholars that the Fellows 'shall imediatly chuse and admitt without delay or contradiction' and made financial provision for the future of the College.<sup>62</sup>

Taking the evidence of activities of married women from this chapter together with the survey from Chapter Six, it can be seen that many of the women of the gentry class used their literacy in the management of households, farms and estates, when they were permitted and encouraged by their husbands. The volume of evidence from letters and other documents is much greater from the beginning of the seventeenth century by comparison with the middle of the sixteenth century (see Table 1 p31). This suggests that the role of women in marriage had altered over the latter part of the sixteenth century and that literacy enabled them to play a more substantial part in the management of the family assets.

### Problems in marriage

Although the majority of marriages for which there is evidence could be described as 'companionate', there were problems in a number of families. Of 21 families whose correspondence was analysed in detail for this study, six contained marriages which are known to have been in difficulty or where a separation was arranged. The conduct books, by placing such weight on conformity and obedience, had the effect that when problems arose they were often blamed on the wife's inability to please her husband, or suggestions were made that she failed to be deferent. Men were less likely to be accused of unreasonable behaviour, although when it did occur, cruelty and physical violence were condemned. Where marriages did break down, it was difficult for wives to gain support and the family network became very important. Families, generally,

---

<sup>62</sup> Dorothy Wadham's letters, held at Wadham College, Oxford. My thanks are due to Mr C S L Davies for showing me the letters; they are printed in *The Letters of Dorothy Wadham*, ed. R B Gardiner, 1904. See also, 'The Foundation of Wadham College, Oxford', Nancy Briggs. *Oxoniensa*, Vol.XXI, 1956.

were anxious to conceal problems for as long as possible, since public acknowledgement of difficulties reflected badly on the whole family.

Among the family papers, there are letters from distressed wives trying to gain assistance from contacts in the family networks in solving their marriage problems. They gave physical violence, actual and threatened, as one cause of marital breakdown. Mrs M Taylor, trying to gain assistance from Mr Gawdy to solve her problems, reported that she was afraid to live with her husband because he had used physical violence against her. He had flung her down the stairs and out of the house and she had a witness, her sister, to prove it. In other cases the accusations were less specific; Mary, Lady Darcy from Hengrave, wrote that 'my injeries are great I have received from my Lord, yet have I dijested them with patience and so mean still; without revenging it in any unlawful or immodest sort whatsoever.' She was supported by her parents and family and able to reach an agreement over a formal separation in 1594. Her grandfather had made careful background enquiries to establish the facts of the case and was delighted to be able to write to his daughter, 'I do rejoice to understand what good report all her neighbours do give her, and that universally, they pity her misfortunes, and condemn her Lord.' Mary Darcy had kept her reputation in spite of the separation.<sup>63</sup>

A series of letters between 1632 and 1637, reveal a serious financial problem in the marriage between Lady Jane and Sir Edward Fitton of Gawsorth in Cheshire, and they show how a woman, able to write her own letters, tried to resolve the problems she faced. Edward Fitton drank heavily, spent too much money and tried to get his hands on his wife's jointure. When Jane Fitton in 1632, wrote to her brother Sir John Trevor

---

<sup>63</sup> M Taylor (no first name given) to Mr Cramps at Doctors Commons, B L Add MS 2,722 f196, undated early seventeenth century: Hengrave letters printed in Gage, 1822, pp216-218.

asking for his advice on how to pay the debts that were being incurred, she confessed that she was not conversant with the estate business because, 'I am and have bin a stranger to his estate and proseedings for so it was his pleasure.' By 1637, Sir Edward was taking more desperate measures and left home having taken her jewels and some money, swearing never to return until she gave him £1000. Her brother's advice was that she should not yield on the grounds that 'it is better crying with mony in my purss then without it.' Ten days later Jane Fitton wrote that she and her husband had been reconciled 'I make no question but he will love me.'<sup>64</sup>

There the correspondence ends, except that after Jane's death in 1638, Edward Fitton wrote to Sir John Trevor referring to the death of his 'loving and dearly beloved wyfe.' Jane Fitton was a woman of some spirit; she had not yielded to her husband's threats and handed over her jointure, her only security. She conformed to the model of the deferent wife expected by both the conduct books and husbands, in that she had not been involved in managing the estate when her husband had not wished it. At the same time, she had sufficient education and skills that when the need arose, for example when her husband was sick or absent, she had shown herself able to manage debts and the estate. Finally, in spite of all her husband's ill-treatment of her, she showed herself as a forgiving wife, able to be reconciled with him. She was fortunate in being able to write her own letters to influential members of her family to secure advice and loans in an emergency; without that her situation could have been much more difficult.

In several cases wives were openly blamed for unreasonable behaviour: Thomas Egerton, Lord Ellesmere who married Alice, Dowager Countess of Derby, complained publicly about his wife's biting tongue and the marriage declined into a series

---

<sup>64</sup> Jane, Lady Fitton to her brother Sir John Trevor, ESRO, GLYnde 558, 1632-7.

of quarrels over land and property. Sir Francis Willoughby of Wollaton Hall, Nottingham, listed his wife Elizabeth's faults; including among them, leading a disorderly life, keeping company with people he had forbidden her to meet, staying up late, reviling him to his face and making a public spectacle of herself. A separation was arranged in 1581, but they were reconciled in 1585 when she agreed to his terms. She agreed in writing with her husband that she would 'study to conforme all my wordes as I may best content and please you, as also to performe all good duties that do become a loving and obedient wife towards her husband.'<sup>65</sup>

Legal separations had the disadvantage of making marital disputes public and could be expensive in legal fees. It could be difficult for a separated wife to obtain money to live on from her husband. Several such wives complained that they were given so little food that they were virtually starving. One of them, Elizabeth Carey, Lady Falkland, was excluded from her parents' home and refused any assistance because they disapproved of her actions. She had converted to Catholicism and refused to obey her husband's wish that she should give up her faith and not teach the children to become Catholics. Elizabeth Bourne's husband was a notorious rake and thoroughly unpleasant: at one time he brought his mistress to live in the family home. Elizabeth found it very difficult to make enough contacts with influential men to improve her situation in the courts in spite of the justice of her complaints. Elizabeth Marbury, a correspondent of Sir John Knyvett, part of a network exchanging favours wrote to ask for his help. She explained...

my husband will not alow me one peny of mony to keep  
my silfe and famely with all, but when I speake to  
him and aske him what I shall doo, hee beds me go to  
my freinds and swars he will not allow me any

---

<sup>65</sup> A T Friedman, *House and Houseshold in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, pp57 and 63.

thing...<sup>66</sup>

Where women were able to write their own letters they were at least able to solicit assistance for themselves and a number did so. Although their position was 'at times desperate, the ability to seek help from contacts to secure the means of survival was enhanced by their ability to write their own letters.

### Conclusions

From the advice given in the prescriptive literature of the period, it is possible to build up a clear picture of the theoretical ideal: the godly household, and the role of women in it. As wives, women were to obey their husbands in all matters. The only exception made by some writers was in the case of religion where wives were not required to act in a way that would endanger their immortal soul. Wives were to manage the household thriftily and at the same time be their husbands' 'helpmeet', able to share their cares if invited to do so. In all their activities they were answerable to their husbands. Women's chastity was to be carefully guarded: this might place heavy restrictions on what wives were able to do; the prescriptive books advised them to stay at home and avoid company. The most significant development in the prescriptive advice with implications for a study of girls' education, was the increasing emphasis on companionship within marriage; educated girls would be better able to fulfil this role. The Catholic humanists were among the first to give the idea prominence in the 1520s and 30s and it appeared increasingly in advice books by the end of the sixteenth century. The

---

<sup>66</sup> Life of Lady Falkland, Lille, Archives du Nord, 20 H:9. f28. For the account of Elizabeth Bourne's difficulties see C A Bradford, *Hugh Morgan*, London, E T Heron, 1939: letters written by her in B L Add MS 12,507 f204, and Add MS 23,212 f187. Elizabeth Warbury to Sir John Knyvett, B L Add MS 2,722 f122, undated early seventeenth century.

existing patriarchal, authoritarian concept of marriage, with its corollary the submissive wife, continued to be supported by the conduct books throughout the period of this study.

An examination of marriage negotiations show that in theory and practice parents and others involved considered girls should be good housewives, pious and obedient. Many parents took their responsibilities over finding a suitable marriage partner for their daughter seriously and took the wishes of the girl into account when making the arrangements. However, there were clearly some marriage negotiations where financial considerations were put above the interests of the young people concerned. Other arranged marriages developed into deep bonds of affection between the partners.

Throughout the period under consideration, there was fundamental agreement between the views expressed in the prescriptive literature and manuscript evidence from men and women of the acceptance of a patriarchal marriage structure. Most women were careful to act with the authority of their husband and if they clashed, deferred to him. Women only confronted their husbands in very rare circumstances.

The evidence of companionship and friendship in personal documents, particularly from the end of the sixteenth century, suggests that although marital experience was diverse, many couples were living what have been described as 'companionate' marriages. The letters from wives confirm that affection was often mutual. The evidence from Catholic families in this study suggests that their experience of marriage was very similar to that of Protestants. Female literacy was a significant factor in the development of closer relationships between husbands and wives, because when they were separated, it enabled them to send private correspondence which was truly personal, and also allowed the sharing of mutual interests. Education made it possible for women to develop management skills widely appreciated by their husbands. The letters from

both women and men reveal far more active participation by wives in family affairs than has previously been thought to be the case.

Serious problems did occur in some marriages. Where there is evidence of women trying to resolve their difficulties, it suggests that they were careful to show that they had tried to conform with the accepted gendered norms in order to gain support within the family for their action. Where they failed to do this, they could expect little assistance. In cases where women were seen to be suffering from the behaviour of a cruel or tyrannical husband, they were able to call on network support if they were well-connected and their own conduct was above reproach. Those without support networks did suffer deprivation and poverty in a family breakdown. The ability to write their own letters enabled them to make contact with the family support networks to try and improve their situation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

MOTHERHOOD: PRESCRIPTIVE ADVICE AND PRACTICE

Motherhood was seen by the writers of conduct books and sermons on marriage and the family as the culminating aspiration of most women. The church considered the procreation and raising of children as the most important purpose of marriage and this sentiment is echoed in much contemporary prescriptive writing.<sup>1</sup> In spite of its importance in the lives of women, very little has been written on the subject of motherhood, and historians have tended to follow the example of the conduct books and have treated fathers and mothers together as 'parents' or to concentrate on the role of fathers.<sup>2</sup> It is important to examine the evidence of the realities to see how far it is possible to locate a separate role for mothers within the family.

Correspondence from gentry families indicates that many fathers were absent for long periods of time and unable to participate in the daily care of children, leaving their wives to bring them up. There is insufficient evidence in the collections studied to consider in any detail how far husbands delegated responsibility for the upbringing of children to their wives when they were present. Letters from men and women where they refer to their mothers or write directly to them, comments from adults writing their memoirs and mothers' own writings are particularly helpful sources in defining the roles of mothers. From literate women who wrote their own letters, it is possible to gain a much greater understanding of what constituted motherhood than has previously been the case. This chapter will give an overview of the theoretical position propounded by the conduct books, and compare male

---

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion on pp87-9 above.

<sup>2</sup> However, see K Charlton, 1994.



advice given with the views expressed by women in print. It will then examine evidence from personal documents of the realities of mothering in order to define the role of mother from these documents. It will compare the theory and lived experience to see how far they coincided and the implications of differences and similarities for a study of girls' education.

### The role of women as mothers: the theoretical position

The educative role of mothers was recognised by many of the writers of conduct books from the beginning of the sixteenth century. These writers broadly agreed that mothers were responsible for the daily care of young children and for setting an example of good Christian behaviour to the household, in particular for their daughters and the female servants. Mothers were central to the spiritual development of very young children and were encouraged by writers such as Thomas Becon, to play an active part in catechising the young people and servants of the household. Marie Rowlands considers that this role was also held to be very important in Catholic families: indeed mothers could earn salvation by their role in bringing up children in the true faith.<sup>3</sup> In theory this transmission of religious culture could be done even if the woman were illiterate and had to learn the texts by heart, but the number of books of guidance produced for learning and teaching the Catechism suggests that many mothers could read, at least in the households where the Catechism was likely to be taught.

Daughters were left in the care of their mothers for longer than sons, who were supposed to be taken out of their sphere of influence around the age of seven, in case they were spoiled. Mothers were constantly advised to love their

---

<sup>3</sup> Marie Rowlands, 1985, p165.

children, but warned against 'cockering', that is spoiling and indiscipline. There was much less advice for women on mothering than there was on how to be a good wife. The limits placed by the conduct books on the time that children were expected to remain with their mothers and the emphasis on the role of the husband and father in the household, suggest that the writers thought that they had said enough by dealing mainly with 'parents' and 'fathers' in their terminology.

There were, however, a number of writers who held that mothers were very important in the upbringing of children. The advice from writers like Erasmus, that an educated wife would not only be a better companion but a better mother, contributed to a climate of opinion favouring the provision of at least a basic level of education for girls and a recognition of the importance of the educative role of mothers. The training for girls envisaged by the Protestant Bullinger, whose advice was first translated into English in 1541, was to learn good manners and suitable texts by heart and he advised that 'Mothers must also teache their daughters to worke, to love theyr housbandes and chyl dren. And let them laye their handes to spynne, sewe, weave...' He also said that women should be able to read, so long as they read godly books, and that reading did not cause them to neglect their main duty which was to order their household. He did not wish them to be 'shut up as it were in a Cage never to speke nor to come forth...' The teaching role thus granted mothers was placed firmly within the family; schooling for girls should take place outside. At school, children should be taught according to their capacities and 'lerne to wryte, to cast a compte, to cyfre, adde, subtraye etc' as well as reading books of scripture and good manners.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Bentley and other writers of conduct books in the

---

<sup>4</sup> H Bullinger, *The christen state of matrimony*, 1541, plxxv v and r.

<sup>5</sup> H Bullinger, 1541, pplxx r and v, lxxv r and lxxi r.

latter part of the sixteenth century left no very clear definition of what mothers ought to do. For the most part parents were given responsibilities for the upbringing of their children together, although Bentley had some advice specifically for mothers. He expected that they, as well as fathers, should know God's judgement and law and teach these to their children. If a mother was bringing up girls, she was not to show them a cheerful face and she should ensure they were obedient, faithful and honest. It was a mother's duty to assist in providing a godly husband for her daughter. Bentley referred more frequently to the worry and responsibility of parenthood than its pleasure. For example he even included advice on what to do if your daughter was deflowered before marriage. William Perkins in *Christian oeconomie* was rather more positive in his views of parenthood, but having placed the wife in a subordinate role to her husband, he had little to say specifically about mothering.<sup>6</sup> The conduct books thus give a restricted view of what constituted mothering and appear to limit maternal influences to the early years.

Five women in the early seventeenth century wrote detailed guidance for their children which was published after the writers' deaths.<sup>7</sup> The publication of these advice books raises a number of questions. How far did the advice contained in them follow the arguments of the male prescriptive books? How did the writers deal with the dichotomy created by the advice given both by the Church and the male writers of conduct books, (that women should remain silent in public and not give opinions) with the deed of writing tracts of advice themselves? The male writers discouraged or even in some cases

---

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Bentley, *Monument of matrones*, 1582, Vol. III, Sixth Lamp of Virginitie, pp33-5. William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie: A short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering a family*, 1609, Chapter 13 on parents.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Grymeston, *Miscelanae. Meditations... Memoratives*, 1604. Elizabeth Joceline, *The mother's legacie*, 1624. Dorothy Leigh, *The mothers blessing*, 10th ed. 1627. Elizabeth Richardson, *A remembrance for my foure daughters*, ESRO, ASH 3501. This manuscript contains part of the work published later as *A ladie's legacie to her daughters*, in three books, 1645. Countess of Lincoln, *The Countess of Lincoln's Nurserie*, 1622.

forbade women from expressing views of their own; nevertheless, mothers' letters show that in private they were prepared to make clear statements of the standards of behaviour they expected from their children. In the sixteenth century some women had already challenged masculine restrictions and had published books, mainly translations of religious works.\* The works considered here are books of advice. In these cases women appropriated the discourse of the conduct books to themselves, giving their own views of what they expected of their children. By appearing in print, they, like other female authors, challenged the received wisdom which said that women should not speak publicly, but they were careful in what they wrote to accept a subordinate role in the family, and in their prefaces to seek higher authority to explain their challenge.

Elizabeth Grymeston, Elizabeth Joceline, Dorothy Leigh, Elizabeth Richardson and the Countess of Lincoln consciously decided to set down at length, spiritual and moral guidance for their children. The writers were drawn from the ranks of deeply committed Christians: Elizabeth Grymeston was Catholic; the other writers were Protestant. In several cases, it was stated in the dedication that the advice was intended to be purely for personal use by the child and that subsequently the writer was persuaded to publish because the advice could be of wider interest. However, it is not possible to check these claims to authorial reluctance. The writers were all modest in their claims to expertise, saying that they were not acting as authorities in the field of moral guidance and emphasising that they wrote because of the love they bore their children and their desire they should grow up to be responsible God-fearing adults, able as Dorothy Leigh wrote to 'climbe the Hil

---

\* Women's published writing of the period has been the subject of a number of studies. Two significant books are, Katharina Wilson, *Women Writers of the English Renaissance and Reformation*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1987; and Ann Haselkorn and Betty Travitsky eds., *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print 1500-1640*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1990.

to Heaven.”<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Ashburnham in a manuscript draft of her later printed work explained her purpose: she was writing for her daughter’s present and future happiness...

...my sweet child accept the love and care of a mother, who wisheth all grace, meeknes, and patience, may possess your soule, to make you good in life, and happy in death, with the dayly use of this, I hope will help to effect, and further your salvation, to the comfort of your affectionate mother...<sup>10</sup>

The Countess of Lincoln’s *Nurserie* stands slightly apart from the others as it is mainly a practical advice book extolling the virtues of breast feeding, but like the others it contains moral guidance. Three of the works are dedicated to daughters; Elizabeth Grymston and Dorothy Leigh wrote for their sons. It is clear from all the works, whatever the disclaimers in the prefaces, that the writers considered they had an important role to play as mothers in guiding their offspring beyond early childhood and that they were persuaded that publication would enable them to influence subsequent generations of children. There were 19 editions of Leigh’s book between 1616 and 1639 and a further four between 1656 and 1674; it was one of the most frequently reprinted advice books of the period.

The published works should be seen against a background of other maternal advice which remained in manuscript. Brilliana Harley, because of her fluency in writing was able to extend the guidance she habitually included in letters, by writing a stitched booklet of 19 pages for her son. She advised him to avoid drunkenness; ‘Obey God. Doo you labor to be as good abroad as at home that you may make it apeare it was the love of goodness made you doo well more than the awe of your parents.’ She concluded ‘I can not but put you in minde of one

---

<sup>9</sup> Dorothy Leigh, 1627, A2 r.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Ashburnham/Richardson, *A Remembrance for my foure Daughters*, ESRO, MS ASHburnham 3501 composed in 1625, written 1635, p4.

more greate evill which yong men use to falle in to and that is to rune into deet, take heede of it remember that the bowrrwer is sarvant to the lender.'<sup>11</sup>

Grace Sherrington, Lady Mildmay wrote a more substantial work of some 912 manuscript pages; her 'Meditations' for her daughter without any thought of publication. It contains autobiographical sections, a commentary on parts of the scriptures, moral precepts and spiritual guidance. Lady Mildmay accepted patriarchal authority and advocated an attitude of submissiveness towards men. Her views on the role of women were more restrictive than the five published authors: for example, she comments that she spent her time quietly at home when her husband was away. Nevertheless, she was active in the neighbourhood. From her manuscripts, it is clear that Lady Mildmay had an extensive knowledge of medicines, and an informal medical practice in the area near her home at Apethorpe in Northamptonshire. She exchanged letters with other practitioners and collected recipes from them. The recipes she left, a total of 270 altogether for remedies for complaints ranging from falling sickness to melancholy and eye diseases, are complex. Her medical understanding of the causes of illness was based on the four humours and religious beliefs: she tried to restore balance in the body to bring it back to health and accepted the need to vary the remedy according to the age and condition of the patient. Grace Mildmay was well-organised; she listed her ingredients carefully and kept notes. Her daughter commented on having 2000 loose sheets when her mother died. She was serious in her study and manufacture of the medicines and her observations of patients. Linda Pollock, who compared Lady Mildmay's papers with other medical practitioners, is of the opinion that 'the type of care offered by Lady Mildmay, in fact, bears a remarkable resemblance to that furnished by regular practitioners.' Her religious beliefs were drawn from

---

<sup>11</sup> Brilliana Harley, 'For my Deare Sonne Edward Harley', B L Add MS 70,118, unfoliated and undated.

divers sources and she wanted, because her faith was of such importance to her, through her writing to pass on the benefit of her experience to her heirs. God, she wrote, is 'My strength, My fortress and my refuge'.<sup>12</sup>

The women writers, whether published or not, were devout and sufficiently confident of their views to explain them in writing, in spite of recommendations in conduct books that women keep silent in public, which in effect meant not expressing opinions. Religion provided a strong motivation for writing their views and a justification for breaking silence. The published women authors together with Lady Mildmay and Lady Harley, were unusual in that they were able to write at length, but there were also the writers whose religious lives were active and vigorous and who were not afraid to pass on advice to adult children and other women.<sup>13</sup> There is little evidence of original theological discussion in the works: indeed it would be very difficult for women to achieve this level of understanding because of their lack of formal education. Instead, in the books there are collections of prayers and moral precepts, culled from a wide variety of sources and put together in a personal way to create an original work. The writers have by this means arrived at their own set of beliefs and values. Elizabeth Richardson collected prayers which she considered particularly suitable for women to use in private on a daily basis. In the final printed version of the book, she explained to her daughter her reason for writing;

---

<sup>12</sup> Northampton Central Library, Lady Mildmay's Meditations (seen on microfilm, Microform Academic Publishers 97377/1). Northamptonshire Record Office, Westmorland of Apthorpe, W(A) 32, 33, and 35. Linda Pollock, *With Faith and Physic. The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay 1552-1620*, London, Collins and Brown, 1993, pp98, 110, 107 and 68.

<sup>13</sup> In the case of Catholic women, spiritual advice and stories of the sufferings of persecuted Catholics were written to keep the memories alive. For example Lady Grace Babthorpe wrote her family's experiences for her daughter after she joined St Monica's Convent in Louvain; WDA WA/A Vol. VI No. 100: Sabine Chambers wrote, *The Garden of our Blessed Lady*, dedicated to the devout Catholic laity of England, published in 1619: Mary Percy translated from the Latin, *An abridgement of Christian perfection*, in 1612.

I know you may have many better instructors then my self, yet can you have no true mother but me, who not only with great paine brought you into the world, but do now still travell in care for the new birth of your soules...<sup>14</sup>

Both Elizabeth Grymeston and Elizabeth Joceline wrote for young children in anticipation of their own deaths. They wanted to be able to offer guidance to the children they would not be able to bring up themselves. Elizabeth Grymeston in her dedication wrote to her son: 'I leave thee this portable veni mecum for thy counsellor, in which thou maiest see the true portraiture of thy mother's minde....' Elizabeth Joceline explained in the dedication to her husband Tourel, 'I wrote to a childe, and though I were but a woman, yet to a child's judgement, what I understood might serve for a foundation to better learning.' While contents vary in detail, the main purpose of the books of the three Elizabeths and Dorothy Leigh is that the child or children should be pious Christians 'good in life and happy in death.' Thus Elizabeth Richardson wrote to her daughters:

you shall finde your greatest hapinesse will be in the true feare, constant love, and faithfull service of Almighty God, which never faileth of comfort and reward, he being the only and most liberall giver of all good gifts and blessings, both spirituall and temporall; to whose infinite mercy and gracious guidance, I most humbly commend you all...<sup>15</sup>

In writing to her sons, Dorothy Leigh included detailed advice on how to bring up children using gentleness and patience and the importance of ensuring that both sons and daughters were at least able to read and write. Among her stated purposes in writing the book, was her aim to inspire women to be more

---

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Richardson, *Letter to my four daughters*, 1645, placed before the Preface, p6.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Richardson, 1645, Preface.



careful of their children, to bring them up gently and to persuade mothers to teach them. She considered that all children should be taught to read the Bible as a help to godliness, emphasising the importance of education:

Labour for learning, or else you can never get it: that is a thing which I cannot buy for you, you must get it by your owne industry and diligent study, if you will have it:...it is more worth then all I can leave you besides...<sup>16</sup>

Elizabeth Joceline, expecting to die, was making provision for her child's upbringing and gave explicit directions to her husband;

If the child bee a daughter I hope my mother Brook (if thou desirest her,) will take it amonge hers, and let them all learn one lesson. I desire her bringing up may be learning the Bible, as my sisters doe, good houswifery, writing and good workes: other learning a woman needs not: though I admire it in those whom God hath blest with discretion, yet I desired not much in my owne...<sup>17</sup>

Elizabeth Joceline clearly accepted a gendered definition of education, but advocated a standard which would give her daughter access to learning and practical literacy. A reading of the letters in this study suggests that many parents held similar views. This attitude may also be compared with the intentions of parents expressed in Essex wills discussed on pp53-7.

Dorothy Leigh's advice to her sons advocated a companionate marriage while it accepted an unequal relationship and the subordination of women. She required her sons to love their wives constantly once they had chosen them, and to remember:

---

<sup>16</sup> Dorothy Leigh, 1627, p180.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Joceline, 1624, Epistle dedicatorie, sig. B5 v.

'If shee be thy wife, shee is alwaies too good to be thy servant, and worthy to be thy fellow.' Like the other published women writers, Dorothy Leigh accepted the patriarchal nature of marriage, and did not seek to change the underlying basis of the institution. By educating her sons, she hoped to alter their expectations and their attitude towards their wives and enable them to become closer companions and friends. She sought to excuse her boldness in writing '...let no man blame a Mother, though she something exceede in writing to her children, since every man knowes that the love of a Mother to her children is hardly contained within the bounds of reason.' She pointed out that it was not her mind that she wished to impress the reader with, but rather the words of Christ.<sup>18</sup>

The advice of the women writers considered here, coincided with the male conduct book writers in that universally they accepted a subordinate role for women in marriage.<sup>19</sup> By writing at greater length on the role of mother, they developed an understanding of motherhood only touched on in the male conduct books. They showed the deep love that many mothers had for their children and their desire to bring up their children according to Christian principles. By publishing their views, the women authors challenged the orthodoxy of the conduct books and the church. In order to make this acceptable, they couched their prefaces and explanations in very careful language, drawing attention to the importance of Christ's words and virtuous example rather than their own, and the need that mothers should themselves set an example to their children. Some referred to mothers in a disparaging way, such as the 'excessive' love they had for their children which had led them to break with convention. Nevertheless, however carefully and modestly they justified their enterprise, the fact that the books were completed and sold was significant.

---

<sup>18</sup> Dorothy Leigh, 1627, pp51, 53, 54, and 11-12.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter Three above.

For their daughters, they supported the concept of an education, albeit gendered, which would enable them to be better wives and mothers; they did not consider that teaching for girls needed to be as advanced as education for boys. The views expressed by the women writers show how they perceived a link between education, a companionate marriage and effective motherhood.

### The role of mothers: the practice

#### Childbirth and young children

The history of childhood has proved a controversial area for historians, but most of the evidence from this study supports the arguments of Linda Pollock. She posited that in the sixteenth century parents did recognise a state of childhood and that children were more than a source of amusement and relaxation.<sup>20</sup> Children were one of the most frequently mentioned topics in the family letters and parents were prepared to spend considerable sums of money and time on their upbringing.

The dangers of childbirth were widely appreciated and the joy of a successful delivery was the occasion of much rejoicing. Dorothy Unton wrote to her nephew Sir Edward Dering on the birth of a son in 1632,

I desire by these lines to wittnes my thanks to you for your care to impart that wellcome newes...that after soe great danger it hath pleased him to bless her with the comfort of a sonne. I know it will take away much of the remembrance of her paine, being requited with the love of a husband, that is soe truly sensible of itt.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-child relations from 1500 to 1900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p2.

<sup>21</sup> Dorothy Unton to Sir Edward Dering, CKS, U 350 C 2/30, 1632.

Jane Fitton in 1634 voiced similar sentiments on the news of the safe arrival of her sister's daughter, and Edward Conway on the birth of his grandson expressed his joy 'in my Brill's safe delivery, and with the advantage of the sex.'<sup>22</sup>

Some grandmothers arrived to stay with their daughters for the birth. In the case of Margaret, Dowager Countess of Cumberland it meant a journey from Appleby in Cumberland to London to join her daughter Anne. Her own experience of mothering and marriage was troubled; her mother had died when she was a child and her father re-married, moreover she had personally experienced a difficult marriage. She is described as longing for the happiness of being a grandmother. Unfortunately, in the end she was disappointed and missed the birth by accident. The Countess had gone out to visit some friends and found herself locked out of the house; Anne's labour was short and by the time she got in, the baby had been born.<sup>23</sup>

Many families had to face the deaths of several babies or children but they were not indifferent to still-births and deaths either of children or mothers. Anne, Countess of Middlesex wrote to her son on hearing of the death of her baby grand-daughter;

I am much troubled to heare that I have lost my little girle I pray God comfort my pore daughter and my selfe for I am much afflited for it. I pray you send me word what was the cawes of her death I will troble you no farther but remane for ever your most

---

<sup>22</sup> Jane Fitton to her brother Sir John Trevor, 1634, ESRO, GLYnde 558. Sir Edward Conway, in Eales, 1990, p24. See also, Anne Cornwallis to her son Kytson, 1563, CUL, Hengrave Vol. III No. 13. For a similar comment from a man, see for example, John Herrick to his brother William, Bodleian, MS ENG HIST C 474 f162.

<sup>23</sup> ed. J P Gilson, *Lives of Lady Anne Clifford and her Parents* from Harley MS 6,177, London, Roxburghe Club, 1916, p29. For the involvement of grandmothers in the later stages of the upbringing of children see pp150-152.

loving mother...<sup>24</sup>

Lady Mary Ingram, deeply distressed, wrote to her husband telling him of the death of her sister. 'Seetheart, I never longed more to see you now, nor ever stood in more need of your comfort for it hath pleased God to take to His mercy my sister Pennell, who died in childbed soon after she was delivered.' This extract shows not only emotional bonds between sisters but also between husband and wife. Mary Ingram enjoyed a relationship with her husband which encompassed mutual support and companionship. This is reflected later in the language of the deed of settlement which Sir Arthur made 'in consideration of the exceeding love and intire affection which he beareth unto his dearly beloved wife...'<sup>25</sup>

In spite of advice to the contrary, the practice of sending babies to wet-nurses continued in the landed and wealthy classes. In 1600 children of London merchant families were wet-nursed in outlying areas such as Hampton, Petersham and Highgate at a cost of 2/6 per week.<sup>26</sup> Breast feeding was rare enough to be noted by several letter-writers, for example, Anne Newdigate nursed five children herself. In 1622 John Coke was worried about the health of his wife Mary, who had a severe pain in her side. He advised that if she thought the pain was caused by feeding the child, she ought to wean him because he was now strong.<sup>27</sup> The Countess of Lincoln's advice was published in 1622 to encourage mothers to feed their own children; but the date of publication means that at best, it

---

<sup>24</sup> Countess of Middlesex to her son, CKS, Sackville of Knole Papers, U269 C242 (12) undated.

<sup>25</sup> A P Upton, *Sir Arthur Ingram*, London, Oxford University Press, 1961, p261.

<sup>26</sup> See John Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicestershire*, London, John Nichols, 1811, 4 Vols., Vol. III pp155-6.

<sup>27</sup> Anne Newdigate's petition for wardship of son Jack, WRO, CR 136/B307, 1609. John Coke to his wife Mary, B L Add MS 64,878 f26, October 1622.

had only a marginal effect on infant-feeding practice during the period covered by this study.<sup>28</sup>

There is little information in the letters about young children. It is suprising that more is not found in letters from mothers, in view of the fact that the conduct books emphasised the key role of mothers in the upbringing of children at this stage of childhood. Perhaps writers did not consider that their husbands would be interested in news of the children, and there are only glimpses from other sources of mothers as educators of young children.<sup>29</sup>

In some cases reports in letters and personal documents were specific about the role that mothers played in teaching their children. In her Memoirs, Lucy Hutchinson recalled that her mother considered that 'the care of the worship and service of God, both in her soule and her house, and the education of her children was her principall care.' She fitted this in with her religious devotions. Lucy noted that her mother 'was a constant frequenter of weekeday lectures, and a greate lover and encourager of good ministers, and most diligent in her private reading and devotion.' Lucy's mother fulfilled the criteria of the conduct books and at the same time set her daughter on the path which would make her one of the best educated girls of her generation and a talented writer. The importance of keeping a persecuted faith alive and transmitting a culture under threat encouraged literacy among Catholic mothers. Lady Babthorpe who ended her life in exile as a teacher of religion at St Monica's Convent, Louvain, wrote down the details of episodes in the life of recusants known to her, including her son, in order to keep alive

---

<sup>28</sup> Countess of Lincoln (Elizabeth Clinton), *The Countesse of Lincoln's Nursurie*, 1622.

<sup>29</sup> For letters containing information about very young children, see for example, Katherine Villiers, Duchess of Buckingham to her husband, B L Harleian MS 6,987 f119v; Mary Coke to her husband B L Add MS 69,869 ff5, 15, 19, and 38, 1606-24. Brilliana Harley to her husband B L Add MS 70,0003 f246, also letters printed in HMC, Portland MSS, Vol. III, 14th Report, App. II, 1894, p21, 1621.

stories of the religious trials in Yorkshire. Anne Line, a widow in London, kept a school for children in one of three houses she maintained for the benefit of the Catholic church.<sup>30</sup>

The ability of mothers to provide education varied a great deal. John Smyth, steward to the Berkeleys in Gloucestershire, wrote of the education of Thomas (born in 1575), by his mother Katherine that 'The most part of his education was at Callowdon under the indulgent instruction of his mother and her waiting gentlewomen, whom in nine years they had only taught to spell and meanly read a little English.' By contrast, in 1623 Mary Coke wrote to her husband that she heard her sons John and Joseph construe half a chapter of the Greek New Testament and that she helped them with Beza's Latin Testament in order to supplement the work they did with their tutor Mr Mease. Mary Coke and her husband discussed the education of their sons in their letters, but never mentioned their daughters. Mary was well-equipped to teach them herself and so it is perhaps for that reason she remained silent. Three daughters wrote confident, competent letters to their father in the 1630s, suggesting an education which lasted some time. Elizabeth Whitelock taught her son Bulstrode to read and to begin to study 'being herselfe well furnished with learning, she had read much, & was able to make use of it, especially she was expert in the french Language.' She also instructed him in what Bulstrode referred to as 'the rudiments of religion'.<sup>31</sup>

Bringing up children in the wider sense of providing their

---

<sup>30</sup> Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. James Sutherland, London, Oxford University Press, 1973, p287. Lady Babthorpe, *A Narrative of*, c.1599, WDA, AAW./A Vol. VI No. 100. Marie Rowlands, 1985, p158.

<sup>31</sup> ed. James Sutherland, 1973, p287, and p16. John Smyth, 1883, Vol 2, p394. Mary Coke to John Coke, B L Add MS 64,878 f104, 1623, 69,869 ff28 and 32. For the letters of Mary, Anne and Elizabeth Coke, see B L Add MS 69,873 ff39, 45-7, 59-61, 67, 71, 75-85. For Elizabeth Whitelock, see ed. Ruth Spalding, *Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke 1605-1675, Records of Social and Economic History, New Series XIII*, London, British Academy, 1990, p44. For a survey of the educative role of mothers see K Charlton, 1994.

daily care and supervising their development, in some families involved grandmothers as well as mothers. Anne, Dowager Countess of Arundel, a Catholic, went to live at Arundel to look after her grandchildren, while their parents were travelling in Italy in 1613. She had already spent time with her daughter and son-in-law Alethea and Thomas Howard when their children had been born between 1606 and 1608. At that time, she had sent reports to the other grandparents Gilbert, Earl of Shrewsbury and his wife Mary about the progress of the babies. On the later visit, she wrote long weekly letters in her own hand, to her son and daughter-in-law, giving them news about the children as well as gossip about the Court, weddings, requests for special purchases, hopes of their speedy return, estate business and what was being said about the cause of their absence. Rumours were spreading, the Countess reported, that their prolonged stay was not due to ill-health but rather because of their interest in Roman Catholicism. She gave bulletins about the children's development which show the depth of her feelings for them and her involvement in their activities. 'They are very good children I thank God.' She reported progress in speaking, problems with chilblains in the cold weather and the suffering little William endured with a 'tersion agu' which caused fits over eight hours. In 1615 Thomas Coke, Mary Coke's brother-in-law was hired as their tutor to travel abroad with them to join their parents. Anne Arundel wrote to him with advice for the journey and the future.

I assure my selfe both you and good Petty will so accomodate ther study to thee disposition of those parts as may stand with ther best health, and I hope you shall find Tunstall redde to geve his best attendanse when they be from ther study for I wish them not at any time to be in the company of the servants without some one of you three, which I doe think will well suppress any evill speech or other unseemly passion, my joy shal be great in ther well doing...<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Linda Pollock, *A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children over Three Centuries*, London, Fourth Estate, 1987. pp 22, 62, 72 and 107. The manuscripts are in the Talbot papers, Lambeth



Anne Arundel reflected the contemporary view that children from an aristocratic background should not spend time alone with servants lest they learn to emulate servants' habits of speech and behaviour. The tutors were there to moderate such tendencies. Some time in 1616 she had to write to her son and daughter-in-law about Charles' death after a short illness when she had desperately sought the best medical advice to keep him alive. She wrote to try and comfort them,

I besech you for godsake to comferte your selfe and my good sweet daughter with the true good of the sweet soule of your littell sonne. For I am sure wee should all have hartily rejoyced if it had pleased god to have sent him health and strenth of body...<sup>33</sup>

Household management was taken seriously by the wives in virtually all the gentry households in this study and they assumed responsibility for it. The pressure to provide for children increased the housekeeping burden and a lack of resources obviously created problems, whether in landed or poor households, particularly if the husband were absent. Lettice Gawdy was well connected; her father was Sir Robert Knollys and yet she wrote to him asking for assistance in obtaining secondhand clothes for her children. He had, apparently, promised her that he would approach a person unnamed to ask for her cast-offs. Lettice was anxious 'for I have had so many chilldric that they have wouren thru all my thinges and therefor I must try my frindes againe for I trus that you have sum ould shurtes in a cornor for me or some old thinges and I do hear give you many umbull thankes.'<sup>34</sup> Lettice's spelling, like Brilliana Harley's was personal although her hand is large and clear and she wrote her letters

---

Palace Library. Anne Arundel to Thomas Coke, B L Add MS 64,875 f162, August 1615.

<sup>33</sup> Anne Arundel to her son the Earl of Arundel, B L Add MS 64,876 f23, c.1616. See also Angela Porter to her son Endymion, PRO, SP 16/534.

<sup>34</sup> Lettice Gawdy to Sir Robert Knollys, B L Add MS 27,395 f125.

confidently.

### Education, schooling and boarding-out

Although the conduct books in their advice limited the sphere of influence of women to young children, many mothers in their letters indicated an interest in the education of their children, both boys and girls, and some were quite knowledgeable about schools. Some of them selected tutors for their children and others arranged their schooling. The correspondence of the Bacon family of Stiffkey, Norfolk, contains letters showing how members of the family kinship network looked after each other, pooling available expertise and sharing a common concern for the education of the children. In 1583, Elizabeth Neville was instrumental in arranging for her nephew Francis to become a boarder at Eton and she also helped to engage a tutor for her sister's son. Jane Tuttoft reported to Nathaniel Bacon in 1580 on the education of the same Francis' sister, Betty, and asked him to pass on the information 'that letel Bety is a great scoller and doth larn as fast as I can tech hur.' Her studies included French, and although Jane approved of her progress in other respects she thought that Betty's French was not very good. Jane Tuttoft sent her own daughter to Nathaniel Bacon's household as a boarder. She wrote to him in 1572 thanking him for agreeing to bring up her daughter and asked that reading, writing and the casting of accounts be included in the training. In 1610, Meryell Littleton wrote to Aunt Meryell at Ashwelthorp 'I have this springe sent my eldest sonn to Oxenford [and] my other two sonns to a free skool, God Allmighty send yt may be for ther good and my comfort.'<sup>35</sup>

This degree of understanding of the educational opportunities

---

<sup>35</sup> eds., A Hassell Smith, Gillian Baker and R W Kenney, *The Papers of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey, Norfolk Record Society*, Vol. 2, 1982-3, Lady Elizabeth Neville to Sir Nathaniel Bacon, pp211-2 and 284. Jane Tuttoft to Sir Nathaniel Bacon, B L Add MS 41,140 f157. Jane Tuttoft to Sir Nathaniel Bacon c.1572, Bacon Papers, Vol. 1 1978-9, p24. Meryell Littleton to her Aunt, B L Egerton 2,715 f114.

outside the home expressed by women is rare in the letter collections studied, but there are sufficient single examples elsewhere to show that literate mothers were involved in planning this part of their children's upbringing and did show an interest in the children's progress. Married women as well as widows were making decisions, so it cannot be said that women were only participating in decision making in the absence of a husband.<sup>36</sup>

Placing children in other households was a common practice in all but the poorest families. It was of great importance to the whole family that children should be well placed, as the practice aimed not only to teach skills, but to make connections either to secure a good marriage or for boys to further their careers. It was generally considered that children were less likely to be spoilt if they were away from their parents, although Joan Herrick for one was not in favour of boarding out. In 1616 she wrote that it would cost at least £24 a year; 'beside, the[y] will never be bred in Relegin as at home, and weare out twice so mani cloth as at home.'<sup>37</sup> Mothers as well as fathers participated in the negotiations to make satisfactory arrangements for the children. The Countess of Bath, a strong-minded and well educated woman, was at the centre of a series of arrangements. She arranged for her stepson George Bouchier to be entered as a lawyer at Furnivall's Inn in London and for his lodgings to be secured. She wrote to her husband on 17 March 1556 explaining what she had done and asking for his consent to proceed with the arrangements. In her next letter of 23 March there is confirmation that her advice had been followed. The Countess of Bath, while capable of making arrangements independently, was careful to refer back to her husband for final approval. This is a clear

---

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Hester Walker and Thomas May to Lady Herrick in the Herrick papers, Bodleian MS ENG HIST C 475 f89, and C 481 f21. Penelope Merry to her grandmother about paying for her daughter's schooling 1630s, CUL, Hengrave 88 Vol.II No. 139. Frances Hertford to her brother the Earl of Essex, B L Add MS 46,188 f170. (probably 1620s)

<sup>37</sup> Joan Herrick, Bodleian MS ENG HIST C 476 f19, c.1613.

illustration of the paradox for women: many were like the Countess of Bath, able to act independently, but at the same time they depended on the approval of their husbands and acted within limits set by them. The Countess herself looked after Elizabeth, the daughter of Lady Anne Cornwallis of Brome in Suffolk. Lady Anne wrote to thank her for...

the goodnes and gret paynes that ye have showed and takyn to my dowghter, ye have done to her that I could not have done and [played] the part of a very own naturall mother, god geve her grace to acknowlege it in her behavior and dute towards your ladyshepe...<sup>38</sup>

The arrangement was successful on two counts, firstly she married the Countess of Bath's son Thomas Kytson and secondly she developed desirable contacts. Margaret Duchess of Norfolk wrote to Anne to ask if she could have Bess (Elizabeth) for a time before her marriage to replace one of her ladies temporarily absent in London. Something of the relationship between the host mother and the girl is visible in the extract cited above; the girl had to learn skills but there was also an emotional bond between the Countess of Bath and Bess. This can be seen in other similar arrangements.<sup>39</sup>

There are some interesting collections of letters from mothers to their sons at University. Lady Brilliana Harley's letters to her son Ned at Oxford are already well-known. There are, additionally, a series of 43 letters from Katherine Paston to her son William (who entered Corpus Christi College Cambridge in 1624) and letters from Elizabeth Smyth to her son Tom, of

---

<sup>38</sup> Countess of Bath about her stepson, CUL, Hengrave MS 88 Vol. I ff63 and 65. Correspondence between the Duchess of Norfolk and Lady Anne Cornwallis, 1560, CUL, Hengrave 88 Vol. I ff155-6.

<sup>39</sup> For mothers placing their children, see for example Barrington Papers, B L Egerton MS 2,644 f234, Richard Whalley to Lady Barrington 1626, and Mary Long to Lady Barrington, B L Egerton MS 2,645 f277, 1631; Mary Meriton to Sir Arthur Ingram about her son, WYAS, Leeds, TN/C Ingram II/ 125, 1626; Margaret Bussy to her brother Sir John Coke about her son, B L Add MS 69,873 f22, 1627.

which five were written after he went to St John's College Oxford in 1622, as well as a number of single letters in other collections.<sup>40</sup> The series of letters illustrate, in a way that is not possible in a single document, the relationship between mother and son. Sadly the correspondence is largely one-sided and only two replies exist: from William Paston to his mother. The writers had strong views on how their sons should behave while they were undergraduates, and were particularly anxious that they should live modestly and avoid being drawn into gambling and expensive ways. Katherine Paston wrote that she hoped to hear that William still hated the smell of 'tobaca'.<sup>41</sup> One undergraduate whose letters have survived was William Gawdy who attended Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. He was a regular correspondent with both his parents. William wrote separately to his mother using a scribe, perhaps his tutor, not even signing the letters himself. He did, however, sign his letters to his father. The contents of William Gawdy's letters represent the perennial concerns of young men; a shortage of cash, items left behind at the start of term, and food parcels needed, for which he gave many thanks. His language is direct and open and the regularity of the correspondence suggests an affectionate relationship between mother and son.<sup>42</sup>

Katherine Paston was one of several mothers who took an intense personal interest in what the boys were studying and expressed clear views on the importance of education. She

---

<sup>40</sup> ed. T T Lewis, *Letters of Brilliana Harley*, *Camden Society*, Vol. LVIII, 1853. Lady Katherine Paston to her son, B L Add MS 36,988 ff25-31, B L Add MS 27,447 ff231-268. The letters are printed in ed. Ruth Hughey, *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston 1603-1627*, *Norfolk Record Society*, XIV, 1941. B R O, Smyth of Ashton Court Papers, Elizabeth Smyth to her son Tom, AC/C48 1-29. Lady Ann Gower to her son Tom 1617, printed in ed. R B Gardiner, *The Letters of Dorothy Wadham*, London, Henry Frowde, 1904, pp109-110. Alice Hatton to her son Christopher at Cambridge, B L Add MS 29,571 f3.

<sup>41</sup> Katherine Paston to William, B L Add MS 36,988 f29, 1624. William Paston to his mother, B L Add MS 36,988 ff32 and 34, 1624-5.

<sup>42</sup> William Gawdy to his mother, B L Add MS 36,989 ff38, 490-498, c.1629; to his father; see, for example, B L Add MS 36,989 ff39-54, 57-9.

wrote to William;

although learninge coms not easily to every one yett to those which have a love to it, it is of all things most delightfull beinge onc gayned. Studie now ther fore, a fewe yeers, and I have no dought, but through the good blesinge of god and thy good indevor but thou shalt easely atayne to it.<sup>43</sup>

Muriel Knyvett, who was supervising the upbringing of her grandson Thomas after the death of his father and the absence of his mother who lived at Court, received lengthy reports from his tutor Elias Travers. In one of them he referred to 'your Ladyship's desire for your soones proficiency in the Greek,' and promised her to teach him what he could.<sup>44</sup> Katherine Paston, writing to her son William, recognised that his aptitude might not extend as far as classics and advised 'if thow canst not attayne to Learninge the Lattin tounge parfitly yett bestow thy time in redinge good Inglish bookes which may furnish thy minde with delitfull good things.'<sup>45</sup> A note on one of the letters says that William gained a good degree in 1626, so perhaps his mother was being unduly pessimistic about his abilities. Most of her letters advised him to study hard and to be obedient to his tutor as this would be of greatest benefit to him both in this life and the life to come.

Involvement at this higher level of education is in marked contrast to the mothering advocated in the conduct books, which suggested that boys should be taken out of a female atmosphere as early as seven years old. The women writing these letters were confident, as were the women writers of the conduct books, about giving advice to their sons and their letters reveal deep affection, an understanding of human

---

<sup>43</sup> Katherine Paston to William, B L Add MS 27,447 f250.

<sup>44</sup> Elias Travers to Muriel Knyvett, B L Egerton MS 2,715 f158v.

<sup>45</sup> Katherine Paston to William, B L Add MS 27,447 f240.

frailty and a real desire that they should learn upright moral and fitting behaviour. Both Katherine Paston and Brilliana Harley were explicit about the moral values they expected their sons to hold.

### Adult children

Although the conduct books make virtually no reference to parenting of adult children, the personal documents in the collections studied show that many adult children continued to maintain contact with their mothers after they had left home. For sons who became apprentices or joined one of the Inns of Court to become a lawyer, took up another profession or went abroad, the periods of separation could be prolonged, even before marriage. If the children were in London or another large city, it was an opportunity for their mothers to have an agent to arrange business or to buy items unavailable in the country. Between 1611 and 1622 Lady Sydney Wynn living in Caernarvonshire received letters from five of her sons; they wrote separately to their father. Maurice, for example, anxiously explained that the beaver hat and the hatband he had purchased on his mother's behalf were the latest fashion and highest quality, but unfortunately had cost rather more than she had sent. He had taken a reliable friend along when he had chosen them and he hoped she would feel able to send him the balance. Ellis Wynn wrote to tell her that he had received the shirt intended for his brother, but that he had kept it. He was short of money until his allowance was arranged and his shirts were worn out. In the same letter he asked her to send a nurse to look after his foster-father who, he had been told, was very sick. William wrote to express concern about his brother Ellis' health; he thought he ought to leave London but Ellis refused and shortly afterwards died of consumption. Robert Wynn wrote to his mother to explain that he was going to become a clergyman and also to console her on the death abroad of his eldest brother, John. He referred to the grief that she must feel but, he advised his mother, she should

'thank God that it hath pleased him in his infinite goodnesse to take him to his mercie for doubtlesse nowe his angell beholdes the face of god. Of all my brethren I lovde him best, and shall never forgette him while I live...'<sup>46</sup>

The contents of the young men's letters to their father in the Wynn collection differed from those to their mother which suggests that they considered that father and mother had different interests. To their father they reported on schools suitable for their younger brothers, estate business, their future plans for careers and on possible marriage arrangements as well as personal matters. Sir John Wynn also received information about shopping in London and the latest fashion, but the letters contain much more about business and arranging marriages for one or other of the children. The two Wynn daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, were taught to read and write, but only four of their letters remain to their father in the period up to 1640.

The number of personal letters in the Wynn collection and an analysis of the contents, indicate the existence of a family linked by affection and common interests. They continued to write letters to their parents even when they lived abroad. While much of the contents refers to the economic ties between parents and children, their writing also reveals respect for their parents and enduring affection for their mother whose individual role in the family they recognised.<sup>47</sup>

### Problems

The conduct books emphasised obedience to parents and a recognition of their authority as the essential core of the parent-child relationship. Much of the advice on child-rearing

---

<sup>46</sup> Robert Wynn to his mother, probably 1617, NLW, Wynn of Gwydir, No. 572.

<sup>47</sup> For the Wynn children writing to their parents, see for example, NLW, Wynn of Gwydir Papers, Nos. 335, 339, 572, 658, 737, 789, 804, 817, 867, 878, 942, 1099, 1299, 1374.



was centred round how to achieve this, although writers varied on the severity of the discipline necessary to success.<sup>48</sup> In spite of this advice, not all relationships between mothers and children were as harmonious as those so far illustrated. Perhaps not surprisingly there is less surviving evidence about problems; an understandable reaction is to destroy evidence of a relationship that has broken down, unless the difficulties have become so serious that court proceedings are undertaken. Alice Fitton's letter to her daughter Anne Newdigate suggests an unbridgeable rift between her and another daughter from an unknown cause. She wrote

I take no joye to hear of your sister nor of that boy, if it had plesed God when I did beare her that she and I had bine beried it hade saved me ffrom a great delle of sorow and gryffe and her ffrom sham and such shame as never hade Chrishyer woman worse now then ever. Wryt no more to mee of her...<sup>49</sup>

A bitter quarrel between mother and son can be seen in the letter written by Lady Elizabeth Russell to her brother William Cecil, Lord Burghley, where she gave a lengthy account of her dispute with her son, Thomas, who had refused to study law in spite of her wishes. He wanted to travel abroad, but she considered it dangerous and stated that he could learn languages from books while still in this country. Thomas had been brought up by his mother, because he was a posthumous baby. Lady Russell estimated that he had directly or indirectly, cost her £7000 plus the cost of his education and as a result, she considered she had done her best to make it possible for him to live well after her death. Her relationship with her son had broken down to the extent that she used the word 'war' to describe it and complained in her letter to her brother that 'the unnaturall hard nature and

---

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, the analysis in Linda Pollock, 1983, Chapter 5, and 1989, and Ralph Houlbrooke, 1984, Chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>49</sup> Alice Fitton to Anne Newdigate, WRO, CR 136/B122.

insolency of this boy hath exceded his brothers.' Her purpose in writing was to try and arrange with Burghley for Thomas to enter his service, where no doubt he would be subject to some discipline and learn useful skills. Thomas, for his part found his mother's plans for him trying. In the mid-1590s he complained of his mother being 'backward for his preferment', and in 1595 he had to explain his absence from a great feast to Burghley. Thomas had been abroad, and he said he did not wish his first meeting with his mother to be in public, where Lady Russell's 'unkind strangeness' would be plain to all. Mother and son obviously had entirely different perspectives on the upbringing of children.<sup>50</sup>

It is possible to find examples of mothers using physical violence towards their children but it is rare. Lady Elizabeth Willoughby of Wollaton Hall locked up her daughter, Winifred and beat her so severely that it was feared she would be lamed. The cause of the beating was that Winifred said she wished to marry her brother-in-law, Sir Percival Willoughby's younger brother, Edward. Several letter-writers in the family commented on Elizabeth's cruelty which they considered was unnatural in a mother. Winifred married Edward in spite of parental opposition, but their defiance meant that they had to manage without financial assistance and Edward spent time in prison for debt.<sup>51</sup>

Re-marriage and the introduction of a step-mother into the family could also cause rifts. Margaret, Countess of Cumberland contrasted her love for her father with her fear

---

<sup>50</sup> For details of Lady Russell's quarrel with her son, see George Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1985, pp200-1. For Thomas' side of the problem, see G R Morrison, 'The land, family and domestic following of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, c.1550-1598', unpublished D Phil., Oxford, 1990, pp90-2. For other examples of mothers quarrelling with sons, see the dispute between Lady Jane Maurice and her son Sir Harry Johns, NLW, Clenennau Papers, Letters 214, 217-9, 221, 324, 364, 371, 446, 447, 450, c.1606; the dispute between Sir John Trevor and his mother Lady Margaret Trevor appears in ESRO, GLYnde 555, 561, 562, 563, c.1630.

<sup>51</sup> A T Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, p67. HMC, *Middleton Manuscripts*, 1911, pp599-600.

of her new step-mother. In the family of Lucy Hutchinson there is an example of both a successful and an unhappy re-marriage. Lucy's mother's parents both died by the time she was five and she was taken to live with an uncle. He is described as honourable but was married to a lady 'so jealous of him, and so illnatured in her jealous fitts to any thing that was related to him, that her cruelties to my mother exceeded the stories of stepmothers...' Her father, by contrast, married a rich widow with many children who 'cast her affections on him'. She died, leaving no children of the marriage; her widower maintained contact with his stepchildren and Lucy comments on some of their children being brought up with her. Heal and Holmes have found a number of examples where adult children could not accept their fathers' choice and in some cases second wives were excluded from property on the death of their husband.<sup>52</sup>

The step-relations in the Bacon family in Norfolk varied. Lady Dorothy Bacon (c.1570-1629) was the second wife of Sir Nathaniel Bacon. She had two sons, William and Owen, from her previous marriage. Her second husband's management of their property from their father led to ill-feeling and finally a law-suit after his death in 1622. Fourteen letters remain, all except one written by Dorothy Bacon herself in a secretary hand. Of particular interest when considering the relationship in step-families, are the eight letters she wrote to her step-grandson Sir Roger Townshend between 1619 and 1622. These show the relationship between the two to have been extremely close, and Dorothy Bacon felt able to open her heart to him on very personal matters. For example, she quite openly mentioned times when she and her husband did not agree and she asked for Roger's assistance in guiding her son, who appears to have been a depressive. At one time he had fallen in love with 'Mistress Sesell', thought by historians to be the daughter of

---

<sup>52</sup> George Williamson, *Lady Anne Clifford*, Kendal, Titus Wilson, 1922, p285. Lucy Hutchinson, *Autobiographical Fragment*, in ed. James Sutherland, *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*, London, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp283-4. See also Heal and Holmes, 1994, pp83-5.

the Earl of Exeter, whom his mother considered an unsuitable match because of the difference in the social status of the two families. She felt that it could only bring unhappiness, and she had an alternative candidate, a gentlewoman. Sir Roger endeavoured to help Owen and he did take some medicine for his illness. In November 1619 Owen was still giving his mother cause for concern. She wrote to her step-grandson;

I heard hee toocke phesecke but I thinke his mind was seckar then his body, for his geving waye to his vyld ewmar[humour] of mallencholdy will be his death I fear, but alase Sir his fathar was overcome with it...And for urdgeng him to marry I never did but lovengly showeng my desier to secke his comfort and my owen therbe, which even that will I never anye more dooe, for God hath taught me to be content with what hee will apoynt ayther sonar or later...

Several times in the correspondence she added a postscript expressing the need for secrecy. Once she wrote 'Good Sir as you love me be seckret to me in this that I have opened my hart to you, and birne this letar for Gods sake.'<sup>53</sup> There are few correspondents as frank and open as Dorothy Bacon about her worries and the problems she faced within the family and there are few records of such attempts by a parent to understand the problems of a troubled child.

### Mothers' views of marriage

Many of the mothers whose activities are described in this chapter were going beyond the advised limits of appropriate behaviour of the conduct books. Mothers were for the most part, acting with the agreement of their husbands who permitted this freedom of action and expression. In their letters when they expressed an opinion on marriage, mothers accepted the patriarchal structure of the family and tended to

---

<sup>53</sup> Letter 7, NRO RAY 488, Letter 8, NRO RAY 493, in ed. Jane Key, *The letters and will of Lady Dorothy Bacon 1597-1629*, *Norfolk Record Society*, Vol. LVI 1991, pp77-109; Letters to Sir Roger Townshend, Nos 5-8, 10-12 and 14.

reflect the advice of the conduct books. They advised their daughters to accept their husband's authority and reminded them of the duty of respect that they owed. This has also been seen in the printed advice book written by Dorothy Leigh. Lady Mary Peyton wrote to her eldest daughter Anne Oxinden;

whatsoever you doe, to love honer and obey your howsband in all things that is fitt for a resonable creture...let no respect be wanting to your howsband and his mother, with the rest of his frends, in this you shall gain your self a good reput and show your self a vertuous wife whoes pris is not to be valued...<sup>54</sup>

In this letter, Lady Mary hinted that she was undergoing some problems in her own marriage, but nevertheless considered it important that the wife should endure rather than protest.

The experience of Lady Elianor Cave's daughter, Margaret, illustrates some of the pressures on young wives to conform. Margaret, who was married to Sir John Wynn's eldest son John, started their married life with her parents-in-law at Gwydir in Caernarvonshire. Lady Cave wrote several letters to Sir John thanking him for the news of her daughter's good behaviour and for his kindness towards her. Margaret's letters to her mother reported the treatment she received from her parents-in-law and as Lady Cave wrote to Sir John, 'express howe infynytly shee is beholdinge to you both for itt. I hope shee will soe behave her selfe; that you maye contynewe such your lovs towards her.' At the same time Sir John wrote to his son who was staying in London 'your bedfellow ys well and very orderly. I see no other in her but that she may proove a very good wyfe...' Margaret was expected to show respect both to her husband and to his parents with whom she was living; and from the letters written in 1606 she seemed to be successful and earned praise from Sir John for her efforts.

---

<sup>54</sup> Lady Mary Peyton to Mrs Anne Oxinden, B L Add MS 27,999 f 171, Feb. 19 1632.

By November 1607 the situation had radically altered. A draft letter from Sir John to Lady Cave complained of her being 'lothesum ether by nature or by syknes' and stated that while he had made his son unwillingly stay with her, he could not make him love her. What had changed? A large part of the answer appears to lie in the portion of unpaid dowry which Lady Cave, a widow, said she was unable to afford, rather than in any alteration in the behaviour of the unfortunate Margaret. A lawsuit between Lady Cave and Sir John Wynn followed and the aftermath continued long after the death of young John abroad in 1614.<sup>55</sup>

Marriage negotiations, widely regarded as one of the most significant events in any family, feature in a number of letters. Mothers often appear as active participants rather than observers on the sidelines even where the transactions were not straightforward. Where the family estates were large and there were substantial assets at stake (settlements of £10,000 could be involved), the negotiations were more likely to be protracted and complex. Marriage settlements required skilled negotiators with a knowledge of family circumstances, as well as business acumen and in most families the best interests of the child at the centre. The inclusion of mothers in discussions which were crucial to the future well-being of their children and the status of the whole family, suggests that they were considered by their husbands to possess abilities of recognisable value. Where a conflict of interests arose, women tended to follow the wishes of their husbands deferring to their authority. Lady Elizabeth Willoughby whose public quarrels with her husband led to their separation, was much more circumspect when expressing concern about her daughter Margaret's intended marriage. Rumours had reached her that a match with a Catholic had been proposed. She wrote;

Either you must in time go back, or God had lost a  
servant and my self a daughter. Remember your

---

<sup>55</sup> NLW, Wynn of Gwydir Papers, Letter Nos. 412, 415, 429, 430, 434, 441, 448, and 458.

calling and your father's mind and portion to prefer you, and you shall find (I flatter not) that you may be sought in marriage of those who are able to treble anything you shall receive of this match.<sup>56</sup>

Even though she had broken convention herself, she wished to remind her daughter of her duty to obey, and she pointed out the advantage to be gained from a substantial marriage portion.

Many women remained in contact with their children after marriage. In some cases they were active on their sons' behalf, administering estates or businesses; others kept their children up to date with family news of births, deaths and other family matters. Spiritual advice was still sent by mothers with deep religious convictions.<sup>57</sup> Agnes Throckmorton came from a Midlands recusant Catholic family conscious of the need not to draw attention to themselves. She was shocked by the behaviour of her son Robin, who was keeping race horses, and she wrote to him to admonish him for his behaviour.

I did hope of more comforte then to see you begin now agayne to kepe runninge horsis. Sum saye the hors is yours and sum saye you have sould it to your brother Tom. This mater hath bin longe in hande but very carfully kept from me till all the contrye talketh of it that papist hath so much monis that

---

<sup>56</sup> HMC, *Middleton MSS*, 1911, p595. For the involvement of mothers in marriage arrangements, see for example, Frances de Burgh, (née Walsingham), wife of the Earl of Clanricarde in negotiations for her step-daughter in 1629, B L Add MS 46,188 ff124, 126, 130 and 138. For an example of a letter expecting deference from a wife, see the Earl of Bath to his wife, CUL, Hengrave 88 Vol. I No. 89, 1557. Agnes Throckmorton wrote to protest to her father-in-law who was trying to exclude her from planning her son's marriage, WRO, Throckmorton CR 1998, Box 60, Folder 1 item 1. Lady Stafford and Lady Berkeley were involved in making the match between Elizabeth Carey and George Berkeley, B L Althorp MS A8 f10.

<sup>57</sup> For mothers' letters to adult children; see Smyth of Ashton Court, BRO, AC/C 48 1-29, 1620s and 30s; Letter from Elizabeth Ashurnham to her son-law-law, CKS, U 350 C2/7, 1625; Countess of Westmorland to her daughter, CKS, U 269 C268, 1639. Ann Townshend to her son Hodge, B L Add MS 63,081 ff123, 126, 127, 132 and 130(copy). Mary Herrick to her son William, Bodleian MS ENG. HIST. C 474, f68, 1578; Mary, Countess of Buckingham to her son, B L Harleian MS 6,987 ff25, 56, 86 and 125, c.1622.

thaye run it awaye...

She continued at some length berating him for his foolishness, for leading his brother astray and for taking no notice of her advice. 'My motherly love is so great to you as my natural affection douth urge me to it, although I verily thinke it will worke no impression on you.'<sup>58</sup> Agnes, in her writing showed little hesitation about setting standards for her adult children.

#### Women as grandmothers

As grandmothers, women could be great assets to the family. Some arrived to provide support at the birth of a new baby; others assisted, as shown earlier in this chapter in the case of Anne, Countess of Arundel, either physically by their presence, or financially with the upbringing of young children and reported on their development. This continuing involvement suggests that an affectionate relationship had developed with their own children while they still lived at home. As the letters used in this survey are from families where there were sufficient funds to pay for servants and assistance, it suggests that grandmothers were included from choice rather than necessity.<sup>59</sup>

Lady Joan Barrington, the focus of a large gentry family based mainly in Essex, was about 70 when her husband died in 1628 leaving her with an income which averaged £1,237 a year up to 1638. Lady Joan was thus a wealthy woman with a substantial

---

<sup>58</sup> Agnes Throckmorton to her son, WRO, Throckmorton CR 1998, Box 60 Folder 1 Item 6.

<sup>59</sup> For other examples of grandmothers' interest in their families see; Elizabeth Smyth to her son Tom, BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court, AC/C48 10-29; Penelope Merry to her grandmother Countess Rivers, CUL, Hengrave 88 Vol. II, No. 139, probably 1628; Anne Cornwallis to son Kytson, Vol. III, No. 13, 1563; Countess of Drumond to daughter Elizabeth Gage about a loan, Hengrave Vol. III, No 58, undated; Joan Coke to her husband John, B L Add MS 69,869 ff46, 55, 57, 59, 65, 68, 70, 71 and 72. Anne, Dowager Countess of Arundel assisted in bringing up her grandchildren, see pp12-13 above. Muriel Knyvett brought up her grandson Tom while his mother was at Court, see p17 above.



estate to manage. The majority of the letters to her in the Barrington collection relate to this period of her life and show her combining her interest in estate matters with a personal interest in members of her large extended family. She went to visit her daughter for the birth of her child in 1629, and remained there for some months. At the same time, she maintained her own household, continuing to take in young people as boarders. Her grandchildren came to stay with her for long periods of time; one for over six years, and she occasionally helped them with money. Lady Joan made a regular allowance of £20 every half-year between 1628 and 1634 to her daughter, Lady Ruth Lamplugh, who was separated from her husband. From 1629, she spent long periods of time living, together with her servants, in the households of her daughter, Lady Mary Gerard and her eldest son Sir Thomas. She came to a financial arrangement with them and paid £5 per week to cover the cost of keeping her own small household. Her importance to her family can be seen in the number of letters they wrote to her and the variety of subjects discussed in them: her daughter, Judith, gave her news from Court and one of her sons kept her informed in some detail about developments in the Thirty Years' War. In 1628 her nephew, Sir Francis Harris, wanted to send her a new book by Sir Humphry Lynde the *Via Tuta: the safe way*, which he said had been the means of his conversion. He knew it would be of interest to her, he said, as she had been discussing moral issues with him.<sup>60</sup> There are few letters from Lady Joan Barrington herself, she was ill at the time when she was attempting to write and only signed her name. She was, as we have seen, interested in books; her accounts listed a number of payments for 'newes books' costing about 3d and Mr A Hildersham's book appeared over three weeks

---

<sup>60</sup> ed. Arthur Searle, *The Barrington Family Letters 1628-32*, Camden Society, 4th Series, 28, 1983. ed. G A Lowndes, *The History of the Barrington Family*, trans. Essex Archeological Society New Series, Colchester, Vol.1, 1878, pp251-75, Vol.2, 1884, pp3-54. ERO, My Ladies Book, D/DBa A15, being the account books of Lady Joan Barrington. Francis Harris to his Aunt Lady Joan Barrington, B L Egerton MS 2,644 f302.

costing 7s, Dr Gibb's book costs 20d.<sup>61</sup> Lady Barrington, as a wealthy widow, was in a position to be of assistance to her family. Many others were not so fortunate, and poverty restricted their freedom to act. It has to be recognised that wealth was a powerful determining factor of the quality of life that widowed grandmothers were able to lead. Nevertheless, an examination of the correspondence in the gentry classes, illustrates that in favourable financial situations grandmothers were significant members of the extended family.

### Conclusions

The evidence from the personal documents shows that mothers were closely involved both in the upbringing of young children and the spiritual life of the household as expected by the conduct books. This continued in many families as the children grew up, although this was not part of the recommendations of the advice books. Extensive evidence from the gentry families in this study shows that among the 'middling and upper sort' many mothers took an active part in supervising and arranging the education and upbringing of their children, both sons and daughters, after the age of seven, although this was not expected by the conduct books. Many husbands left their wives for long periods of time to bring up and educate the children on their own. During these periods, many women showed that they were knowledgeable about education, career and marriage opportunities and were able to give useful advice and occasional direction to their children. Mothers with strong religious and moral beliefs passed on their beliefs to their children. Where mothers were active in the bringing up of children, it was with the permission or active encouragement of their husband; it was very difficult for a mother, to

---

<sup>61</sup> News books were cheap publications, appearing regularly and attempting to satisfy both the need for real news, some of it from continental Europe and the demand for sensational items. Mr Hildersham's book published in 1628 was 'Lectures on the Fourth of John'. No trace was found in the STC of Dr Gibb's book.

resist the wishes of her husband. Many husbands recognised the skills that their wives had and utilised them, for example in marriage negotiations.

Although it was not expected by the conduct books, mothers frequently maintained contact with their children, both sons and daughters, after they had left home, showing an interest in their activities and sometimes giving them financial support. Women able to write their own letters were able to maintain more personal and informal contact with their children after they had grown up. Some grandmothers were closely involved in the upbringing of their grandchildren for long periods of time.

Mothers very largely deferred to their husbands if there was a clash of opinions, thus accepting the status quo of a patriarchal family structure. Where they gave advice on marriage to girls or boys either in letters or books, the women seen in this study reinforced the view of women as the subordinate sex.

The evidence from the letters indicates a variety of experiences of motherhood from close bonds of affection to despair and bitterness. Problems can be seen to occur as a result of faults on both sides. Similar patterns of behaviour are found in the Catholic and Protestant families in the letter collections studied. This reinforces the view that differences between family experience for women in landed families are not accounted for by sectarian divisions but are the result of other factors such as male attitudes to women, temperament and economic circumstances.

There are substantially larger numbers of manuscripts relating to mothers from the end of the sixteenth century than for the earlier period. This supports the argument that there were fundamental changes in the attitude towards the upbringing and education of daughters in order to create educated mothers.

## CHAPTER FIVE

STANDARDS IN WOMEN'S EDUCATION

This chapter will consider the standards in education reached by women based on a range of sources. Evidence of women's writing ability will be reviewed and their handwriting studied, in order to consider the use of handwriting evidence as an indicator of levels of education. The notebooks of Rachael Fane, the earliest examples of girls' exercise books found in this study will be analysed. Evidence from women's personal documents will be examined as a means of evaluating their reading interests as adults. The educational standards of nuns will be considered separately, because of the distinctive nature of sources relating to them. The value of subdividing the level of women's education into five bands will be considered and evidence of the attainments of women in the three main bands represented in this study will be examined.

The study of women's role in the family in Chapters Three and Four has demonstrated that there were many occasions on which women of the gentry needed to read and write. Chapter Two showed that for the most part arrangements for the teaching of girls were informal, making the task of measuring the standards reached and quantifying the numbers of girls being taught complex. However, it is possible to begin to draw up categories of educational attainment by examining the internal evidence from the documents studied, which will facilitate a discussion of women's education in the period and permit some comparisons to be made. The literacy of single women living outside families, such as nuns, most of whom shared similar childhood educational experiences with women who married, will be integrated into the classification of levels of educational achievement of married women, in order to give a more complete overview of women's education.

### Writing ability

Evidence of girls' ability to write and to read is derived from a number of sources. In this study the main sources were personal documents and letters. The problems of using signature evidence of literacy have been debated in recent years.<sup>1</sup> The situation is particularly problematic for the historian regarding women, because they had fewer occasions to sign their names than men. For example, in August 1586, when the inhabitants of Enfield Chase petitioned Lord Burghley for a Sunday market, they had to sign their names or make their marks. The petition listed 417 males and one female, Mystrys Decror. Only three signatures appeared, while most of the rest of the names, including Mystrys Decror, have marks beside them. It seems that the clerk gave up on his task of collecting them as some 29 are missing.<sup>2</sup> Women appear much less frequently than men as witnesses or plaintiffs in court proceedings and as a result it is more difficult to locate signatures to count.

An analysis of the letter collections was made in order to examine the style and fluency of the hands and to count the number of women writing letters and the number of letters they wrote. In a few cases the lack of biographical details created problems in identifying precisely that the letters were written between 1550 and 1640 by women who lived between 1558 and 1610. The women were divided into categories according to whether they had written the whole letter, had written a short message only, had signed the letter or had sent it unsigned. No letters were sent with a mark. The women who wrote a message were included with the writers of whole letters, because the ability to write a message indicated that they were able to write more than their name and would be able to

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example, Wyn Ford, *The Problem of Literacy in Early Modern Europe*, *History*, 1993. This article raises a number of interesting questions but reaches no very clear conclusions about them.

<sup>2</sup> B L Lansdowne MS 47 No. 18.

write a letter if the need arose. The ability to write a whole letter and the confidence to send it, imply a level of education and experience in writing significantly higher than for women only able to sign their names. Most of the women sending the letters found in the collections studied, were members of the extended family, related either by blood or by marriage, although there were a number whose names do not appear on the family trees and who do not appear to have any blood ties.

It is possible to identify three main types of handwriting in the women's letters: cursive, italic and secretary hand. The italic hand gained popularity in England after 1550 and was recommended for girls because it was easier to learn and since they were believed to be less capable than boys, it would be more appropriate for them.<sup>3</sup> Cursive script developed out of the italic hand; it was rounded and the words were written without the pen being lifted from the page.<sup>4</sup> Some additional flourishes were added by individuals particularly in signatures. After comparing women's hands, it was decided to merge cursive and italic into the same category because so many hands incorporated elements of both. When the handwriting of 357 women, both letter-writers and signers, was examined, 304 wrote a variation of cursive or italic hand, 40 used secretary hand and 13 a combination of both cursive and secretary hands. In several families, for example the Smyths of Ashton Court, it was noticeable that girls had not been taught to join their letters, although they fall into the category of frequent correspondents. By the beginning of the seventeenth century many boys were also being taught the new humanist script. The results of this can be seen in the letters from men dating from the early seventeenth century. Fewer were written in the secretary hand favoured in the mid-

---

<sup>3</sup> See, for example Martin Billingsley, 1618, sig C4 v.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of handwriting in the period see *Elizabethan Handwriting 1500-1650*, Giles E Dawson and Laetitia Kennedy-Skipton, Chichester, Phillimore, 1981, Preface.



3. Two hands illustrating scripts which incorporate elements of both cursive and italic hands; for example, some of the letters are joined and some have loops.

out themel me for  
nothinge done  
ed just by: i hate  
it diorse with all  
therefore will tro  
with no moie but  
s selfe to doo what  
e best to your selfe  
piced ishall not be  
out it nothinge  
contentment  
truly: Your loving  
uncle  
Finn. EXLTY

for it. you  
to be paye  
that wee m  
ch monies a  
intend to  
youe gran  
good. I know  
I imagine. b  
what his  
not beste to  
can jrejan  
it not beste  
affection mi  
I hope Ashton. are will doe her more  
ven to excuse them they will excuse them  
im to you and my daughter with than  
e your ever assured loving mother  
Elizabeth Smyth

because  
because

4. Rachael Fane practising a script which includes some letters of secretary hand.

from false good and from tied abtaine  
In cutting things be ingt and plaine  
Doe nott to all to good men more  
To bad men what thou doest is left  
Thy neyghbour life doe not defame  
Nor speake nor ill to hurt his name  
Thy raddell and thy good report

5

In a few letters it was possible to make a direct comparison between the handwriting of a husband and wife. For example, Mary Mingay and her husband Anthony, sent several joint

<sup>5</sup> The hands are all reproduced smaller than actual size. Hand 1; Magdalen Bagenall to Sir John Trevor, ESRO, GLYnde 559: Hand 2, Agnes Throckmorton to her father, WRO, CR 1998, Box 60, Folder 1, Item 1: Hand 3 a; Frances Countess of Exeter to the Earl of Middlesex, CKS, U269/1 CP/42/2: b; Elizabeth Smyth to her son Tom, BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court, AC/C48/6: Hand 4; Rachael Fane notebooks, CKS, U269 F 38/1.



letters. Anthony Mingay wrote the main body of the letter and Mary added a message at the end. Mary Mingay's hand displays much less skill in writing; the letters are large and the pen is pressed heavily on the page. The strokes are uneven and the hand is much less fluent than her husband's. Nevertheless, the messages were added to eight letters and there are 10 letters which she wrote herself. It is not often possible to make such direct comparisons between the writing skill of husband and wife on the same page, but separate letters do exist in several collections of correspondence.<sup>6</sup> In virtually every case seen in the study, the women's handwriting showed less fluency, an indication of a combination of lack of training and lack of practice: a few of the women, such as Anne wen Brinkir, Jane Maurice and Mary Coke, demonstrated competence to a similar level to men, but these were the exception.

An analysis of the numbers of letters being sent and the numbers of women writing them in 13 of the collections studied was made: the results appear as table 3, below. A total of 794 letters was sent by 248 women. Of these, the proportion of letters wholly written by a secretary was 4.4 per cent, a total of 35 letters: few of the women sending letters did not sign them. The high total of unsigned letters (10) appearing in the Hengrave collection could be the result of several causes: firstly the collection spans a longer period than the others and starts in 1550, when fewer women wrote letters. Secondly, the Countess of Bath was in a position of influence and three of the letters written by scribes in the 1550s are from poorer women outside the family seeking favours. For example in 1557, Jane Baker the old nurse for her children, on her deathbed wrote to the Countess with a request to pray for

---

<sup>6</sup> These comparisons can be made in the following correspondence: Dering correspondence, letters from Sir Edward Dering, Ann Dering and Unton Dering his second and third wives respectively, in CKS, U 350 C2, and U275 C1; Wynn correspondence, letters from Sir John Wynn and his wife Sydney, in NLW, Wynn of Gwydir, Nos., 596 and 739; Coke correspondence, letters from Sir John Coke, Mary Coke and Joan Coke, his first and second wives, in B L Add MS 64,878, f26, 64,874, f54 and 69,869, f38.

her and to divide her inheritance among her children.<sup>7</sup> Her successors as mistress of the house at Hengrave occupied a similar position of influence. Thirdly, several letters were written by a secretary for women known to be able to write. They may have had personal reasons such as illness for not writing a letter on particular occasions.

Table 3. Numbers of women sending letters in 13 gentry families

Collection	No. letters sent	No. women	No. unsigned letters
Trevor	101	9	2
Knyvett/Paston/Gawdy	196	54	10
Herrick	30	20	0
Oxinden	22	12	1
Barrington	38	18	0
Clenennau	27	18	7
Wynn of Gwydir	52	23	3(?)
Hengrave	84	38	10
Clifton	33	18	0
Coke*	103	22	1(?)
Smyth	108	16	1

Total	794	248	35
-------	-----	-----	----

\* In the large collection of Coke papers, the volumes studied included B L Add MS 69869 and 69873 in Coke Papers Series II, where most of the women's letters are located and a sample of 13 volumes out of 55 in Coke Papers Series I.

The table includes the same 13 families as table 1 chapter 1. The proportion of women able to write or sign their names among the female correspondents across the 13 families in table 2 (p35) are similar to the pattern found in the other families studied (see table 1 p31). The pattern of letter-writing is very similar to that of most of the other family collections studied where family arrangements and news, and health were major topics of concern.

<sup>7</sup> CUL, Hengrave Papers 88, Vol. I, f86.

The average number of letters written by each correspondent in the 13 collections was three. This disguises wide variations. Jane Baker was one of a number of correspondents from outside the kinship group writing about legal arrangements, seeking favours or writing about personal matters: their names generally appear only once in the collections. For example, in the Trevor collection, Mary Rottman from Amsterdam, wrote to Sir John Trevor at length about some problems over the supply of beer to the household of Lady Trevor, who was temporarily resident in the Netherlands and some difficulties over the lease of a house there, but the rest of the correspondence is from women in the extended family.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, two women, Jane Fitton and Magdalen Bagenall, sister and cousin respectively of Sir John Trevor each wrote over 30 letters to him. Jane Fitton wrote about the problems she was experiencing with her husband. The topics in Magdalen Bagenall's letters include estate business, politics, personal matters, securing a commission for her husband with the troops going to Ireland and concern about her father's intention to re-marry.<sup>9</sup>

In the Smyth of Ashton Court collection, Tom Smyth was the centre of most of the correspondence in this period. His mother Elizabeth Smyth wrote 30 letters to him, his wife Florence wrote 22 letters to him and his sister Mary Smith wrote 15 letters, 13 of which were to him. Other female correspondents, such as his Aunt Bridget Phelips and his cousin Elizabeth Phelips from Montacute in Somerset, wrote to him asking advice about estate matters or personal problems.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Mary Rottman to Sir John Trevor, ESRO, GLYnde 554, undated c.1630.

<sup>9</sup> Jane Fitton to her brother Sir John Trevor, ESRO, GLYnde 558, 1631-7; Magdalen Bagenall, to her cousin Sir John Trevor, ESRO, GLYnde 559, 1624-37.

<sup>10</sup> BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court Papers, Elizabeth Smyth, AC/C48, 1622-41; Florence Smyth, AC/C60, 1630s; Mary Smith, AC/C53, 1626-34; Bridget Phelips, 7 letters AC/C56, 1638-58; Elizabeth Phelips, 6 letters AC/C57, 1630s.

A comparison can be made between the predominantly gentry women writing letters and women of other social groups in London signing depositions in Testamentary Causes in the Commissary Courts. In samples taken between 1594-7 and 1597-1603 the following results were obtained.

	<u>Marks</u>	<u>Signatures</u>	<u>Initials</u>
1594-7	23	6	2
1597-1603	28	13	9 <sup>11</sup>

The occasion requiring the signing of a deposition was the registration of marriage. Two people, not necessarily the future bride and groom, were required to obtain the official agreement. The figures are insufficient to draw any conclusions about percentages but it would be fair to conclude that among the 'poorer sort' in London, illiteracy was high compared with gentry women. Even so, the proportion of women's signatures is considerably higher than that suggested by David Cressy in his estimate of female illiteracy based on women's signatures in London in the early modern period.<sup>12</sup>

Two volumes of correspondence sent to Julius Caesar, Master of the Court of Requests from 1591, yield information about levels of writing literacy mainly among aristocratic women and their connections.<sup>13</sup> Within the collection of letters described as written principally by the nobility, are 73 letters written by 43 women. Both men and women, except when the men were acting on official business, appear to be writing to Julius Caesar on similar matters; often requesting that particular cases should be expedited or introducing and recommending

---

<sup>11</sup> London Guildhall Manuscripts, MS 9,065A Vols. 2 and 3.

<sup>12</sup> David Cressy, 1980, p121, where in table 6.5 he concluded that in the period 1580-1700, 76 per cent of women in the diocese of London, City and Middlesex made a mark and were thus illiterate.

<sup>13</sup> B L Add MSS 12,506 and 12,507.

third parties. From a sample reading of the letters, it would seem that the women were engaged in a recognised form of correspondence as a matter of course. Similar letters requesting favours were also sent by women to Lord Burghley, and to Lionel Cranfield as Lord Treasurer.<sup>14</sup>

Of the 43 women:-

- one wrote only her initials on 5 separate letters (Magdalen, Viscountess Montague)
- one signed her first name only
- 29 signed their names
- 6 wrote a greeting as well as a signature
- 6 wrote the complete letter.

Two signatures included some secretary hand letters, but the rest were written in an italic hand. The literacy rate seen here in this tiny aristocratic group, a self-selecting sample, if the initials are included, is 100 per cent, but with wide variations in competence, reflecting varying amounts of teaching given to them as girls.

A similar variation in writing standards within a group that was broadly socially homogeneous can be seen in the signatures made by women of the Court when acknowledging the gifts of Queen Elizabeth. One book covering the period 1561-1585 still remains where 66 women received gifts; of these 53 signed their names and one wrote her initials.<sup>15</sup> The style and competence of the hands vary considerably. For example, Margaret Garnett wrote her first name only in an italic hand and added a skull and bone. Lady Elizabeth Woodhouse wrote in an uncertain hand and Edeth Brydeman wrote her first name and the first letter of her surname only, in capitals. Eleven women signed in secretary hand or a mixed hand, the rest were

---

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, B L Lansdowne MSS 12, 28, 51 and 53; and CKS U269/1 CP18, CP28, CP52 and CP111,.

<sup>15</sup> Lost from her majesties back, PRO MS C 115/L2/6697. This title is written on the outside of the bound volume, and it records, not losses, but gifts.

italic. Some signatures indicated a high degree of writing skill, both among those writing secretary hand and italic script. Not all the women accepting gifts were aristocratic; several were waiting women. They are described as 'woman to the Lady Dacres', and 'the Lady Paulet her woman.' Many of the names such as Lady Douglas Sheffield, Abigail Henningham, Lady Frances Cobham and Lady Mary Scudamore occur elsewhere in the correspondence collections, an indication that they used their writing skill to carry out their Court functions and maintain contact with their kin networks. They were, for example, conduits of influence and were approached by outsiders to use their situation to obtain favours with the Queen or officials. (For a further examination of women's role as intermediaries see Chapter Six.)

It is much more difficult to locate examples of the handwriting of nuns. A series of closures of convents in recent years has meant the re-location of archives, and evidence from Catholic families had less chance of survival because their religion made persecution more likely and many were unable to maintain family estates with their archives in the early modern period. There are some women's letters and personal documents remaining in Catholic archives, but most information about the standards of education reached by Catholic girls has to be derived indirectly from other sources, such as convent annals and obituary books and will be discussed further below.

As well as the evidence from women's letters, it is possible to find information about what women had studied and the levels they achieved from other personal documents, for example in letters from other members of the family, from memoirs and from accounts. It is important not to overlook these sources from other members of the family, but to recognise the problems inherent in them. The emotion of the writer might colour his opinion of the subject of the comment. For example, Philip Gawdy wrote to his brother c.1592 and

commented on his sister-in-law's writing.

I receyved those letters that wer written by your best beloved secretary...and though she hathe lately gotten a smacke of the lattin tongue, yet I thinke I have more Spanishe than she, though I can not excuse her of writing fals orthographye, but I will answer her in Spanishe that I will remayne at her commaunde, pour la vida...<sup>16</sup>

In this extract, Philip Gawdy, whose own spelling reflects the lack of an agreed orthography in the period, considered that his sister-in-law was unable to spell correctly, although problems in this area do not seem to have prevented her from learning Latin and Spanish.

The love felt by one member of the family for another at times led to exaggeration, for example in this extract from the memoirs of Sir Roger Twisden, who in his notebook comments on the education of his mother, Anne, born in 1575; 'She had the best way of expressing her mind in writing with the most facility I ever met with in a woeman.'<sup>17</sup>

This is high praise indeed, and needs to be verified. Sir Roger's comment can be compared with two letters from Anne Twysden to her husband which remain, which suggest that Sir Roger's experience of reading women's letters was limited. Anne Twisden expressed her ideas fluently, but the spelling is personal at times. Talk is "taulke" and said is "sed". She wrote the whole letter herself on both occasions, in an italic/cursive hand with the letters separate. In the first letter from c.1625, she comments on her ill-health which made it difficult for her to write.<sup>18</sup> Sir Roger also wrote that his mother was fluent in four languages, Latin, Italian, Spanish

---

<sup>16</sup> B L Egerton MS 2,804 f84.

<sup>17</sup> B L Add MS 34,163 f80r.

<sup>18</sup> B L Add MS 34,173 ff9 and 11, c.1628.

and French. He commented that she was discreet about letting the world know about it.<sup>19</sup> The development of modesty had been an important part of her education as well as languages, and helps to explain the reasons why it is difficult to find out about the education of women in the period. Even if the fluency is exaggerated, Anne's interest in learning the languages, places her education at a high level.

The problems that some women had in writing could even be appealing to their husband. John Winthrop who became Governor of New England writing in 1618 alluded to his first wife's letters. He...

observed the scribblinge hande, the meane congruitye, the fals orthography; and broken sentences etc: and yet founde my heart not onely acceptinge of them but delighting in them, and esteeminge them above farre more curious woorkmanship in another, and all from hence, that I loved hir.<sup>20</sup>

Mrs Winthrop's education from this evidence appears to be at the level of basic literacy. She wrote with difficulty, but would have been able to read print. Philip Gawdy, Roger Twisden and John Winthrop all express admiration for the educational achievements of the women whose writing they comment on, although they were clearly lower than their own. This supports the argument for a gendered definition of education in the period.

The education of Susannah Cholmley, and Elizabeth Whitelocke mother of Bulstrode Whitelocke, is only seen through the writings of their sons. Susannah Cholmley's parents died when she was very young and she is described as being educated with her cousin-german Mrs Jane Hotham of Scarborough.

---

<sup>19</sup> B L Add MS 34,176 f65v.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in D M Healds, 1928, p289.



She was a very virtuous, religious woman, a loving wife, and understanding in the managing of her husband's affairs, both domestic and out of doors in his absence.

She died aged 32 in 1611, which Sir Hugh, the writer of the Memoir, considered a great blow to the family, because her husband was not a good manager and spent money unwisely, keeping race horses in training and dabbling in alchemy. He thought that Susannah, with her influence over her husband, would have been able to prevent the sale of so much land. The education and upbringing she received falls into the category of a virtuous education; the use of the word education by Sir Hugh focused on this point. There is no mention of specific abilities, although her management skills were clearly recognised in the family.<sup>21</sup>

Elizabeth Whitelocke was described by her son as being widely read with a good knowledge of History and French. She gave him lessons by the time he was four. Writing for his children he explained, 'Your grandmother though a woman, hath left you an example herof by a booke written with her own hand a collection of many choice promises and precepts out of the booke of God.' Elizabeth Whitelocke was also expert in medicine and cures and helped the poor of the neighbourhood.<sup>22</sup> Bulstrode Whitelocke by his use of the phrase 'though a woman' here indicated that he considered it was surprising that a woman was sufficiently well educated to be able to write a whole book, albeit a compilation rather than an original creation.

The analysis of the women's letters above, shows how important they are in the study of women's education, but there are

---

<sup>21</sup> *Memoirs of Sir Hugh Cholmley*, Privately Printed, 1787, p30.

<sup>22</sup> *Diary of Bulstrode Whitelock 1605-1675*, ed. Ruth Spalding, *Records of Social and Economic History*, New Series XIII, British Academy, 1990, Entry for 1609-1610, p44. Preface and dedication of *The Annales of his own life*, B L Add MS 4,992, p12v.

three main problems which have to be taken into account before reaching conclusions about the levels of education reached by women.

Firstly, women's letters remain in much smaller numbers than men's letters and care has to be taken about generalising from too small a sample or concluding ~~that~~<sup>9</sup> the absence of letters meant that women were not taught to write. As the chapters on the role of women in the family have shown, there were fewer occasions on which they needed to write letters, since they were managing estates or businesses generally only in the absence of their husbands. Personal letters on social and family matters were less likely to have been preserved, but the lack of letters should not be taken as lack of female education in a family. Some women, for example Venetia Digby, are known to have been well-educated but none of her letters remains. Her husband, Sir Kenelm Digby, referred in his letters to the notebooks containing her sermon notes, which he kept after her death and to her writing her own will, but there is no trace of any manuscripts. A family servant, Dorothy Abington referred to a single paper, which has also disappeared, that Venetia left with her to give to Kenelm in the event of her death.<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, there are a few examples in the letter collections of women who were able to sign, sending a letter unsigned, for example the Countess of Bath, Lady Kytson, Lady Rivers and Penelope Gage in the Hengrave Collection.<sup>24</sup> This practice can also be seen in men's letters. This suggests that there could be a problem of counting a single unsigned letter as an indicator of illiteracy. In other letter collections there may be examples of a letter written or signed, or such letters may no longer exist, but the only letter from a particular

---

<sup>23</sup> ed. V Gabrieli, *A New Digby Letter Book*, *NLW Journal*, 9, No.2, Winter 1955, p133; *NLWJ*, 10, No. 1, Summer 1957, pp82 and 85. Dorothy Abington to Kenelm Digby, B L Add MS 38,175, No.1, undated, c.1633.

<sup>24</sup> CUL, Hengrave 88, Vol. I f117; Vol. II f48; Vol. II f123; Vol. II f172.

correspondent still extant, by chance, is unsigned.

Thirdly, it may not be possible to gauge accurately a woman's skill when there are only a few letters from her. Some of the women refer in their letters to the problem of writing when they were ill, or in old age. Others refer to problems with their eyesight. Lady Joan Barrington, for example, left few letters of her own, and these are signed with a shaky hand. These, however, date from her later years, and the number of letters written to her suggest that she had been in her prime a very active correspondent. Some correspondents refer to having physical problems using a pen because of sickness or injuries. Eleanora Zouche wrote:

I have bene very sicke, & not yet so well recovered  
[that I can] induer to wryt or to read but with  
great payne, yet [when I] remember to whom it is, I  
can not in any wise yeld to any excuse, but that I  
must troble yow a lytle [amidst] your other wayghty  
affarse to read my scryblyng.<sup>25</sup>

Letters written under such circumstances would not reflect accurately the skill of the writer. It is important, wherever possible to set the letters in context to understand the place of literacy in a woman's life.

The variations in competence both of men and women are too great to act as useful indicators of standards of education on their own. The standard of women's spelling varied widely; even in a period where there was no single agreed spelling, some of the letter-writers deviated substantially from common practice. Some seem to have spelled phonetically, but others have no particular rule that they follow. Some like Brilliana Harley have an internally consistent method, but one which did not conform with conventional orthographic habits: children is generally 'chillderen', bless is 'blls', do is 'doo', little

---

<sup>25</sup> B L Harleian MS 6,994 f4, 1586-9. The manuscript is torn in one corner, the words in brackets have been supplied in the original.

is 'littell'.<sup>26</sup> Lettice Gawdy's spelling, seen on p141 is indicative of a lack of reading experience and observation of good practice, although she was a frequent correspondent. She wrote letters regularly to her husband and her son referred in his letters to the frequency of her letters to him. By the middle of the seventeenth century, spelling was beginning to be standardised, but even then there was still some latitude. Lack of practice in writing as well as lack of teaching must have made a difference to women writers when spelling.

Modesty affected the judgement of some women commenting on their own skills in a letter. Some of them were aware of their shortcomings and denigrate their writing. Elizabeth Oxinden explained to her husband Henry, 'if you don't hear from mee it is not for want of true love unto you but my bad writing.'<sup>27</sup> In 1643, Anne Dewes wrote to her brother-in-law, 'your kind lines invite me though an ill scribe to assure you that my affection is as heartie towards you as the best eloquence canne expresse.'<sup>28</sup> Bridget Willoughby, writing to her father c.1582 in a letter full of expressions of filial duty and respect was concerned about 'being able to indict a letter to him as she ought, her small skill and little use of writing she hopes will make him excuse this her first letter.'<sup>29</sup>

Some of the problems of defining standards achieved in women's literacy can be overcome by using the family groups of letters in order to build up a clearer understanding of family relationships and the uses to which literacy was put by women. It also permits both a comparison of the handwriting of an individual over time and in some collections the handwriting of mother and daughters. These relationships can be seen in

---

<sup>26</sup> Brilliana Harley's letters in B L Add MS 70,118.

<sup>27</sup> B L Add MS 27,999 f106, undated 1620s.

<sup>28</sup> B L Harleian MS 379 f114.

<sup>29</sup> BMC Middleton Manuscripts, 1911, p557.

several of the families in this study where there were letters from numerous literate women, for example, Smyth, Trevor, Coke, the Knyvett/Paston/Gawdy group. In none of the families was there an expressed interest in the education of girls, yet in each family there are frequent examples of educated daughters able to write their own letters.

The notebooks of Rachael Fane (1612-80) give the most detailed information about the standard of education reached by an individual girl in the course of her studies, in the period.<sup>30</sup> Although the date of her birth falls just outside the criteria adopted for the study, hers are the earliest example of a girl's exercise books found and are very important for that reason. Rachael was brought up at Knole, Kent, in a family which contained several well-educated women: Lady Grace Mildmay was her grandmother. There are 15 notebooks in the collection of varying sizes, the pages are sewn together, and not all have been filled.<sup>31</sup> In them, Rachael practised different styles of handwriting, translating from French and at the same time, learned moral principles appropriate for a young gentlewoman.

Six notebooks develop meditations on particular themes, mainly religious in origin. She copied out a sermon preached at St Paul's Cross in 1616 by Samuel Ward entitled 'Collections out of the balme from gealead to recover conscience'. In another she wrote out sentences intended to illustrate suitable behaviour for a young girl. Dedicated to the young 'Mistris Grace', she wrote;

I will show you what is comly for a virgin. There are foure things, modestie, silence, shamefastnes, chastitie...A tender harted woman will be sure to shew mercy; But a high spirited woman must be warily observed...

---

<sup>30</sup> CKS, U269 F 38/1, 38/3 and 38/4.

<sup>31</sup> One has been marked by a cataloguer as possibly in another hand.

The virtues being inculcated in Rachael Fane are comparable with those found in the Commonplace books of Brilliana Conway and Lucy Hutchinson.

The meditations on Psalm 50 start out in humanist script for three pages and then contain 17 pages practising secretary hand. This was obviously more difficult for her and lines were ruled to help Rachael to keep her writing straight.

In a second group of three notebooks, Rachael was studying Seneca. One is headed 'A discours in forme of device betwixt Sence and Reason, Touching remedies against divers accidents of this life. Gathered from writings of Seneca'. A second notebook is entitled 'Epistles choisen out of Senegue', translated from the French. In the third, containing extracts from Seneca on poverty, the text only covers half the page; the rest is left blank. The sentence at the top, 'Il se faut plus arrester au sens, qu'au mots', suggests that the purpose of the exercise was translation. The practice of entering parallel translations on opposite pages was common in the period. In 1626, Rachael made a parallel translation of a text entitled, 'Reponse de L'Imperatrix Abra: sur La Lettre de la Royne zahara.' There are few corrections in this notebook which suggests it was fair copy; in other books there are many crossings out. It is marked on the inside cover, 'Meditation de la vanites and misere de la vie humaine'; an indication of the moral purpose behind Rachael Fane's studies. F38/4 consists of a bundle of some 83 items, mostly in Rachael's hand almost entirely religious in content, including sermon notes and some earlier versions of some of her exercises.

As well as French, Rachael was also taught Spanish and Latin. In one notebook from 1625, there is a page of instructions on how to pronounce Spanish. There is also the beginning of a vocabulary list in neat handwriting in three columns, Spanish, Latin and English: written out six columns to a page. The Spanish list is alphabetical.

Rachael gained sufficient confidence from her education to write a masque in 1626 to be performed by <sup>nine</sup> Fane children. It included such characters as the Goddess Venus, Cupid and a shepherd and small parts so that even the youngest could join in. Some music and dancing was provided for in the directions. The notebook also contains a poem on birth and death written on the death of her young sister Francke.<sup>32</sup>

The standard achieved by Rachael Fane seen in these notebooks, is high and puts her among the best educated girls of her generation. She had been introduced to two foreign languages and one classical, she was able to write two different scripts fluently and she was learning moral precepts and christian behaviour suitable for a young gentlewoman at the same time. None of the notebooks contain any evidence that she was taught mathematics. The date of the books indicate that she was still being taught at the age of 14.

#### Reading ability and interests.

The evidence for women reading, like that for writing, has to be gleaned from a variety of sources. It is important in a survey of literacy to distinguish between the ability to read print and the ability to read handwriting. In this study most of the women, because they were able to write, would have been able to read hands that they were familiar with; that is for most of them, cursive and italic hands. Simonds Dewes recognised the difficulties his wife might have had reading his hand, and in two letters to her, he very carefully printed.<sup>33</sup> In any survey, reading literacy is likely to be substantially under-estimated because, although it was the skill that was taught first, any specific reference made to an individual woman reading book has to be written down. It is important to approach the subject of women reading indirectly,

---

<sup>32</sup> CKS U269 F38/3.

<sup>33</sup> Simonds Dewes to his wife, B L Harleian MS 379 ff16 and 22, 1626 and 1627.

by examining the literature designed to appeal to a female readership, by looking for evidence of girls being taught to read, even if they were not taught to write, and by noting references to reading in correspondence and other personal papers.

It is possible to deduce Brilliana Harley's reading as a girl from the marginal notes in her Commonplace Book. She used mainly the Bible and Calvin's Institutes and there are references to Mr Perkins' works and to Mr Cole.<sup>34</sup> The extent of her reading implied by the choice of books and the length of the Commonplace Book place Brilliana in level one of the categories of education along with Rachel Fane. If the historian were to rely on her spelling and her handwriting as indicators of education, then a different conclusion might be reached. Books were mentioned specifically in some of her letters; in a letter to her son Ned in 1638 she wrote...

I thanke you for the Man in the Moune.<sup>35</sup> I had hard of the booke, but not seene it; by as much as I have looke upon, I find it is some kine to Donqueshot.<sup>36</sup> I would willingly have the French booke you rwrite me word of; but if it can be had, I desire it in French, for I had rather reade any thinge in that tounge then in Englisch.<sup>37</sup>

The internal evidence from the letter shows that Brilliana was able to read French fluently, had read Don Quixote and the Man in the Moon and enjoyed exchanging ideas about books with her son. This confirms the conclusion reached from a reading of the Commonplace Book that Brilliana had been well taught, and

---

<sup>34</sup> 'Mr Perkins' is William Perkins whose *Complete Works* were published in 1612. In the *Short Title Catalogue*, Thomas Cole who published *Sermons* in 1553 and 1564 is listed.

<sup>35</sup> Francis Goodwin, *The man in the moone: or a discourse of a voyage thither* by Domingo Gonsales, 1638.

<sup>36</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, *The history of the valorous and wittie knight-errant, Don-Quixote*, was first published in English in 1612.

<sup>37</sup> Brilliana Conway's *Commonplace Book*, NUL, Portland London MSS, Pl Fm 5. Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley, ed. T T Lewis, *Camden Society*, Vol.LVIII, 1853, p13.



was widely read.

A range of reading matter is commented on in the following examples. Jane Fitton in a postscript to a letter to her brother Sir John Trevor, wrote, 'I truly thank you for doctor duns works I admire his poetry and raile at his paridoxs.'<sup>38</sup> Florence Smyth, like Lady Joan Barrington read Newsbooks.<sup>39</sup> Frances Egerton wrote to Anne Newdigate thanking her for a book 'which I hope will make me soe skillfull against I see yow, that I shall have cause to acknowledge myself your scholler.'<sup>40</sup> Mary Wilford, of the Catholic Throckmorton family, in a letter to her mother asked 'pray you if you can spare the booke of the life of S Catharine send it me by Mr Richardson and you shall have it agane very safe.'<sup>41</sup> References like these from the correspondence of women are particularly valuable as they indicate what women were actually reading and in a very few cases what they thought about the books.

There is some evidence of women owning their own books and in a few cases they owned their own libraries. However, it is worth repeating the caveat that book ownership is not necessarily the same as book readership. In a situation where a woman owned a bible or a book with a valuable binding, they were probably family heirlooms: David Cressy argued that Bibles had other purposes than for reading. Contextual evidence needs to be considered about the likelihood that the books were read. In the case of Elizabeth and Bridget Brome of Barstall House, who owned books separately from their brother, it is possible to conclude that the books were read. The

---

<sup>38</sup> ESRO, GLYnde 558, undated 1630s; 'doctor dun' is John Donne.

<sup>39</sup> BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court, AC/C 60/15, 1629. Judith Barrington to Lady Joan Barrington, B L Egerton MS 2,645 f319, 1631.

<sup>40</sup> WRO, Newdigate Papers, CR 136/B105, 1613.

<sup>41</sup> WRO, Throckmorton Papers, Box 60 Folder 1 Item 4. *The Life of St Catherine a princely virgin and widdow of Suecia*, foundress of the Brigettines was written by I F, published in 1634 and dedicated to Catherine Neville, daughter of Lord Abergavenny.

family was Catholic and their books were listed in a document sent to Lord Burghley because they were accused of recusancy. Most of the two sisters' books were in English, unlike their brother's which were also in Latin and French.<sup>42</sup> By the end of the sixteenth century only those families whose adherence to the Catholic faith was strong remained sufficiently committed to be listed as recusant. Their faith was kept alive largely through the literacy of its members.

Bequests in wills give more details about female book ownership, although it is important to distinguish between books being owned for their contents rather than their value. Some women owned considerable libraries. In 1628, Lucy Harrington, Lady Bedford bequeathed 180 books, a library of considerable size to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. Johanna Wilkinson, was one of several women who had closely involved herself with Protestants even during Mary's reign. She left to Richard Chamber 'all those my books which Mr Hooper had the use of during his life.' Bequests are also found in wills made by women of poorer backgrounds.<sup>43</sup> In Essex, Alice Billing left, 'my great *New Testament* and my *Great Bible*' to her three children; the will of Alice Cornelius of Canterbury, a widow who died in 1579 left a *Bible*, a *Paraphrase* of Erasmus, a *New Testament*, a *Service Book* and *Augustine's Meditations*. Both these women were unusual, because few women wrote wills and they specified books in their possession; unlike Johanna Wilkinson, they had no strong religious connections with known figures.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, it is difficult to know whether 'my book of gold with the chain' left by Anne Walsingham to her daughter in 1564, was a book to be treasured for its

---

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Sears Jayne, *Library Catalogues of the English Renaissance*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1956, p127. Manuscript in B L Lansdowne MS 50 No. 76, ff163v-164r.

<sup>43</sup> Lady Bedford's bequest, Sears Jayne, 1956, p154-5; Johanna Wilkinson PROB 11/42B/29.

<sup>44</sup> ~~Emmison~~ 1976, p123; Clark, in L Stone, 1976, p102.

binding or the contents.<sup>45</sup>

John Herrick, a London merchant, distinguished between the books he left to his sons and those he chose for his daughter Mary. 'The Bible lying in the hall window and the Newe Testament...which is Mr Calvin's translation' was given to Thomas, Bartholomeus de Propretalibus was given to John and Mary was left 'one silver spoone gilte and the Aubrye in the great Paler and the Booke of Martirs or Monuments.'<sup>46</sup> John Herrick by specifying the distribution of the books himself in his will, showed that they were important to him; by giving two books to Mary, he indicated that he thought her capable of reading them. Another father, this time a much poorer husbandman in Essex, left his four sons a book each. To his daughter Elizabeth he left *The Governance of Vertue* and to his daughter Margaret 'my double psalter and my broad service book.'<sup>47</sup> Books are mentioned in wills infrequently, even from the gentry, so their inclusion suggests they were important to the donor.

Evidence of women's interest in reading can be obtained from the biographies and memoirs of the period. Elizabeth Tanfield, the daughter of a judge was forbidden to read by her mother. In a biography written by one of her daughters, it was explained that she was so determined to read, that she bought candles from the servants at a cost of 2/6 each and by the time she was 12 she owed them £100. At 15, she was married to Henry Carey, who then left to travel abroad. After some time, Elizabeth was sent to live with her mother-in-law who appears to have treated her with deliberate unkindness. Elizabeth was confined to her bedroom, but when her mother-in-law discovered that she drew pleasure from the opportunities for reading thus

---

<sup>45</sup> Anne Walsingham PROB 11/47/32, 1564. I am grateful to Mary Prior for the two PROB references in notes 38 and 39.

<sup>46</sup> Will of John Herrick, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS ENG. HIST. C478 ff212-3, 1588.

<sup>47</sup> F G Emmison, 1976, pp123 and 125.

provided, her books were removed. Her married life was strained and the situation became more difficult as a result of her conversion to Catholicism. The intellectual interests of her early life continued and developed and she wrote *Mariam*, said to be the first original drama by an English woman and she made translations, including a 'lives of the saints' in verse.<sup>48</sup>

The Puritan Philip Stubbes' biography of his young wife, Katherine, commented on her constant reading of the scriptures. In this she was behaving much like other devout women of both faiths. Grace Lady Mildmay, Lady Margaret Hoby, Margaret Clitherow, and Venetia Digby all conformed to this pattern. This degree of religious devotion and commitment, appears rarely in the letter collections studied, although several of the women, such as Lady Joan Barrington and Lady Brilliana Harley, supporters of the Puritan cause, were known for their active involvement in local religious issues and debates. Because of the Recusancy Laws and the severe penalties for possessing proscribed books, Catholics had to be more circumspect, particularly if they were in an area where the law was rigorously enforced. As a result there is less evidence about the reading habits of Catholic women.

The symbolism of portraits of the period can also indicate an interest in reading and women's education among the landowning classes.<sup>49</sup> Portraits were collected in the large country houses in order to impress visitors with the significance of the owner's genealogy; heraldic devices feature frequently in the paintings.<sup>50</sup> The choice of objects painted with a sitter was carefully constructed to represent the character, social status and state of mind of the subject of the painting.

---

<sup>48</sup> Life of Lady Falkland by her daughter, Archives du Nord, Lille, MSS 20 HG.

<sup>49</sup> Roy Strong, *The English Icon: Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraiture*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, *The Language of Painting*, pp29-42.

<sup>50</sup> Roy Strong, 1969, pp43-6.

Elizabeth Brydges, Lady Kennedy was painted with a favourite pet, a small dog, and there is a finch resting in a spray of eglantine; the flower which represents virginity. Several women, such as Lady Walsingham, held a gift that they had been given, such as a glove or jewel carefully held open to show the portrait of the donor.<sup>51</sup>

By the end of the sixteenth century increasing numbers of women were being painted with books in their hands. In some cases, the painting indicates that the book is associated with piety rather than intellect, for instance in *memento mori* paintings where the anxiety about making 'a good end' also led to the inclusion of other objects associated with death such as a skull.<sup>52</sup> In many other portraits of women, the book held in the hand made no direct link with religion. The triptych portrait of Lady Anne Clifford and her family, not only acted as a genealogy, but gave a life story of Lady Anne as well. The left panel shows her with a lute, her hand on an open music book. On the wall above are portraits of her tutor and governess next to bookshelves holding large books. The right panel shows Anne Clifford aged 56, a widow in black; one hand rests on a book, the other points at a small white dog at her feet; above her are portraits of her two husbands and bookshelves with some of the books disordered. The diaries and accounts of Lady Anne Clifford have been quoted in this thesis. She was a well-educated woman; a formidable character who spent over 35 years in a law-suit to recover her property. Once she had been successful, she spent much of her time taking a close interest in her children and grandchildren, building, managing her estates and in charitable works.<sup>53</sup> Mary

---

<sup>51</sup> Roy Strong, 1969, pp197 and 171.

<sup>52</sup> For an example of a *memento mori* painting see The Judd Memorial, Dulwich College Picture Gallery, reproduced in Strong, 1969, p39; Arthur and Elizabeth Chute at The Vyne, Basingstoke.

<sup>53</sup> Great Picture of the Clifford Family, at Appleby Castle. For details of the life of Anne Clifford see, for example, ed. D J H Clifford, *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, Alan Sutton, Stroud, 1992.

Honeywood (1547-1620), noted for her piety, was painted at least twice with a book in her hand. She was a committed Protestant and correspondent of the religious Reformer, Bradford when he was in prison.<sup>54</sup>

Although in many cases links can be made between the image of a woman with a book and an interest in reading, caution has to be exercised before making a direct connection between a portrait with a book and a literate woman. For example, in the case of Joan Alleyn, first wife of Edward Alleyn the actor manager, there is a portrait of her holding a red bound book, but her letters show that she was illiterate. Her step-father wrote on her behalf and she added nothing to the letters herself. It has been suggested that the book was added to the portrait later, or it may have been included because of her charitable works, or through respect for her husband's profession: little is known about her life.<sup>55</sup>

The number of portraits found (65 to date) indicates the significance of the symbolism of the book chosen to be included with the sitter.

Images of women with books are also found on tombs. The public recognition of death and mourning became increasingly important by the end of the sixteenth century and the commissioning of elaborate tombs marked the significance of a marriage in dynastic terms and the position of a family in its locality.<sup>56</sup> In tombs and monuments where women are represented holding books, this can generally be taken to represent piety

---

<sup>54</sup> ed. H T, *Letters of the Martyrs of the English Church*, London, W Swan Sonnenschein, 1884, pp202-10.

<sup>55</sup> Portrait of Joan Alleyn, Dulwich Picture Gallery. Letters of Joan Alleyn, Dulwich College, MS1 ffl1b and 52. See also William Young, *The History of Dulwich College*, 2 Vols., London, Bumpus, 1889: ed., Aileen Reed and Robert Maniura, *Edward Alleyn, Elizabethan Actor: Jacobean Gentleman*, Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1994.

<sup>56</sup> For further discussion of this see Clare Gittings, 'Expressions of Loss in Early Seventeenth-Century England', forthcoming.

as much as literacy. For example, Lady Eleanor Sadler, who died in 1630 aged 80, is the subject of a wall monument in Salisbury Cathedral. She holds a book and is buried under the pew where she prayed daily for 50 years; clearly a model of piety. The tomb of Sir Henry Yelverton and his wife Margaret, at Easton Mauduit, Northamptonshire, is a large decorative monument full of emblems of mortality and shelves full of books. The recumbent figures of Sir Henry and Lady Margaret both hold books in their hands.<sup>57</sup> Although no documents relating to Lady Margaret which would confirm her interest in reading have yet been located, the choice of image is significant. Inscriptions and epitaphs on monuments give some information on the literacy of women, although piety, charity and devotion to family were more frequently mentioned. A poem written by Elizabeth Tanfield for her husband who died in 1625, was engraved on his tomb in Burford Church, Oxfordshire; itself an indication of her literacy.<sup>58</sup>

#### Other educational attainments

In the absence of an agreed formal curriculum for girls, it is important to consider aspects of their education held by contemporaries to be central to a girl's upbringing. Some elements of girls' training had traditionally been acquired orally; for example medical recipes, cooking and needlework had by the sixteenth century acquired their own manuals of instruction and literature. These have a place in a discussion of girls' education and literacy.

In addition to the extensive knowledge of herbal remedies of Grace, Lady Mildmay discussed on pp130-1, a number of other

---

<sup>57</sup> Gyles Isham, *Easton Mauduit, Northamptonshire Record Society*, 1974, pp30-1.

<sup>58</sup> The poem ends:- Love made me poet,  
And this I writ  
My heart did do it,  
And not my wit.  
Clare Gittings, *Expressions of Loss in Early Seventeenth-Century England*, forthcoming, pp14-5.

women were active in the preparation of herbal remedies and medecines. Lucy Hutchinson's mother gave £300 to Sir Walter Raleigh for experiments while he was in the Tower. According to Lucy, she learned by these experiments and used the knowledge to help the poor who could not afford doctors.<sup>59</sup> According to her daughter, Margaret Russell spent much time reading and had wide interests, including alchemy, the distilling of waters and chemical extractions for she 'had a good deal of knowledge of minerals of herbs of flowers and of plants'.<sup>60</sup>

Little is known about the mathematical abilities of women; cyphering is mentioned in some wills, but not sufficiently frequently to draw any conclusions. The ability of some women to keep their own household accounts has been discussed on pp114-5 The precise measurements needed for making the more complex remedies such as those made by Grace Lady Mildmay, required mathematical skills. It is equally difficult to make any judgements about standards in girls' musical education because of the wide variation in the teaching available. Until further evidence is found, achievements should be considered on an individual basis.

Needlework is often viewed as a feminine craft and practical housewifely skill rather than as an art form, regardless of the originality or creativity of the individual piece. However, the finest pieces of embroidery from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries often contain indirect evidence of girls' education. The design element often revealed in the subject matter chosen, a considerable biblical or classical knowledge. For example, Bess of Hardwick, sufficiently educated to write her own letters, when she was guarding Mary Queen of Scots, spent some time

---

<sup>59</sup> Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*, London, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp286-7.

<sup>60</sup> *Lives of Lady Anne Clifford and her parents, summarized by herself, from Harley MS 6177*, Intro. J P Gilson, Roxburgh Club, 1916, p23.



embroidering with her royal captive guest. Although Bess' skill as a needlewoman was cruder than Mary's, they produced designs which included classical subjects and Latin mottoes. There are a number of panels, originally part of bed-hangings, featuring animals, birds and plants such as an elephant, a monkfish (interpreted literally) and a pheasant.<sup>61</sup> The designs have been taken from natural histories including Conrad Gesner's *Icones Animalium* first published in 1555 and *La Nature et Diversite des Poissons* of the same date. Fictitious creatures were included with real ones.<sup>62</sup> Bess of Hardwick must have known the books, perhaps introduced to them by Mary Queen of Scots. While it can be argued that copying or interpreting a picture required no reading ability, it is hard to imagine women using books for their designs without the skill necessary to read them. Among the collection of contemporary needlework at Parham in Sussex, are numerous examples of fine hangings illustrating Bible stories, including the Judgement of Solomon. Publishers considered it worthwhile to produce books of advice on needlework such as *A booke of curious and strange inventions* in 1596. In the dedicatory poem, the author revealed his opinion regarding the capacity of women to learn: he considered needlework to be especially suited to women. He explained how even 'maidens of base degree' should learn skills at needlework because then they would be able to rise above their station and become companions of noble women and earn esteem for themselves by their skill.<sup>63</sup> Although the anonymous author considered women intellectually inferior to men, he was prepared to grant them sufficient knowledge to read his book and follow the instructions contained therein.

By piecing together evidence from this wide range of sources a

---

<sup>61</sup> The Oxburgh Hangings are now at Oxburgh Hall with a few panels held at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

<sup>62</sup> Margaret Swain, *The needlework of Mary Queen of Scots*, New York, van Nostrand-Rheinhold, 1973, pp65-67.

<sup>63</sup> Anon, *A booke of curious strange inventions*, 1596, Preface.

greater understanding of the occurrence of women reading in the early modern period is gained.

### Nuns

A study of the levels of education among nuns offers insights into the nature of educational attainment among a particular group of women. Most of the English convents abroad placed great emphasis on the importance of education; before professing, women had to be able to read at least and most had reached a high standard of education. Most nuns joining the Benedictines were able to sign their own professions.<sup>64</sup> If candidates were considered not to have reached a sufficiently high level, they spent more time as scholars in the schools attached to most of the newly established convents or they were permitted to join as lay-sisters.<sup>65</sup> The Novice Mistress of the Benedictines was required to teach her scholars and novices 'to sing, reade, pronounce a right, and the like...'<sup>66</sup> The standard of education reached by many nuns can be seen in the obituaries written in several of the convents and in their published works. Although learning was so important to the nuns, a dichotomy is clearly visible between their ability to write and translate significant books needed for the convent and for Catholics outside, and the reluctance expressed in several obituaries to write for others. There is a tension between the vows of the convent and the nuns' emphasis on humility and the denial of self on one hand, and the intellectual ability to write on the other. Both Lucy Knatchbull and Teresia Bream of the Benedictine Abbey of Ghent

---

<sup>64</sup> Confirmed by Sister Margaret Truran of Stanbrook Abbey in a letter to the author.

<sup>65</sup> See for example the situation at the Franciscan Convent school where the Book of Clothings lists the children attending the school attached to the Convent. In 1626, 9 girls are listed as attending. Franciscana, ed. R Trappes-Lomax, *Catholic Record Society*, Vol 24, 1923, pp5 and 15. The help of Felicity Dick in defining terms relating to the early convents is acknowledged with gratitude.

<sup>66</sup> Alexia Gray, *The rule of the most blessed father St Benedict*, Gent, published in facsimile by Scholar Press, Aldershot, 1976, p35.

were said to have destroyed papers or have refused to write their own ideas in the first place through humility.<sup>67</sup> This must, in part, explain the lack of surviving evidence about the educational attainments of the nuns.

One source of evidence of the level of education of the English nuns is the list of Catholic books of the period.<sup>68</sup> Most of the published works by Catholic women are translations by nuns; for example, Mary Percy translated *An abridgement of Christian Perfection* in 1612; Catherine Francis translated *Of the third rule of St Franceis* from Dutch in 1625; Prudentia Deacon translated St Francis Sales' *Delicious entertainements of the soule*, published in 1632; and Alexia Gray translated *The rule of the most blissed father Saint Benedicat patriarke of all munkes*, in Gent in 1632. Sabine Chambers of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary at St Omer published a work of original prose, *The garden of our Blessed Lady, or a devout manner how to serve her in her rosary*, in 1619. In a dedicatory epistle she wrote that it was for the Catholic laity of England. It explained the creed, the pater noster, significant events in the life of Christ and how to say the rosary. These works had to be published abroad and could only be smuggled back to England; carriers risked the death penalty, so they exist in only a few copies and have been little known.

Music is another indicator of the level of education of the nuns. Several of the Superiors of the Augustinian and the Benedictine orders developed the music of the liturgy for their daily services. Some of the nuns took lessons from English organists living on the continent. John Bolt was teaching at the Benedictine convent in Brussels and Richard Dering became organist to the English Convent of the Blessed

---

<sup>67</sup> Obituary Notices of the Benedictine Abbey of Ghent, *Catholic Record Society*, Misc. XI, Vol. 19, 1917, pp11 and 49.

<sup>68</sup> A P Allison and D M Rogers, *The contemporary printed literature of the English counter-Reformation between 1558 and 1640*, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 2 Vols., 1989-94.

Virgin Mary in Brussels.<sup>69</sup> Mary Scudamore, when she became an Augustinian in Louvain, brought with her an organ costing £45. At first she was the only person who could play it, but later, others were taught to play. The Chronicle comments on the way the organ helped to save their voices because they sang mass very often. When Sister Mary Best died in 1625, the 'Obit Book' recorded that although her voice would be missed, 'we could have wished she would not have sung so loud, because she drowned our voices.'<sup>70</sup> Convent records show that the nuns were singing not only plain chant but also anthems in parts. Two great Mass Books, some old song books and some antiphonaries and versicle books were sent with the English nuns, together with Mary Scudamore's organs, when they left the Flemish convent at Louvain.<sup>71</sup> In addition to liturgical music, the nuns sang Salve Regina, Te Deum, and an anthem 'I will strick the Pastor and the sheep of the flock shall be dispearit.'<sup>72</sup> The occasion of Margaret Clement's 50 year jubilee was celebrated for a week. At High Mass, a set of viols played all through the service and a special anthem 'Esto mihi Domine in Deum protectorum' was sung. Different monasteries provided the singing on other days and the Duke's musicians contributed to the festivities.<sup>73</sup> Music became part of the ritual at the Franciscan Convent founded in Brussels in 1621. Marie and Jane Perkins were noted as excellent viol players and singers and it was said that they introduced music into the Choir. Marie and Elizabeth Jerningham were both described as fine

---

<sup>69</sup> A Hamilton, 1904, Vol.I, p42. Chronicle of the First Monastery Founded at Brussels 1597. Published St Mary's Abbey, Bergholt, 1898, pp120-1. My thanks to Sister Margaret Truran for this and other valuable references relating to the early Benedictine houses.

<sup>70</sup> A Hamilton, 1904 and 1906, Vol. I p36; Vol. II pp13-14.

<sup>71</sup> A Hamilton, 1904, Vol. I pp65-6.

<sup>72</sup> Obituary Notices of Nuns of Benedictine Abbey of Ghent, Catholic Record Society, Misc. 11, 1917, pp39, 43 and 45.

<sup>73</sup> ed. John Morris, *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, London, Burns and Oates, 1872, Vol. 1 p40.

musicians; Marie was an organist and Elizabeth a singer.<sup>74</sup> Eugenia Poulton, the second Abbess of the Benedictine Abbey of Ghent, was particularly interested in maintaining the liturgy and its music. Under her guidance the nuns began to sing solemn masses and she set out processions on St Mark's day and Rogation days. Eugenia Poulton was also responsible for the growing reputation of the Convent which led to an increase in the number of girls sent from England, both as novices and to the school.<sup>75</sup>

Within the English convents several nuns had a reputation for intellectual pursuits. For example Aloysia Beaumont 'understood and spoke Latin, translating divers pious things into English. She had a fine sweet voice, and was an excellent quire-woman...' Lucy Knatchbull described her spiritual struggles and her search for perfection in manuscripts which remained in the convent. Teresia Bream was 'as excellent at her pen as any of her Sex both for writing and inditing.' Elizabeth Shirley, a Canoness at Louvain, wrote a life of Mother Margaret Clement of some 87 pages. The detailed chronicles and obituary books of the convents were written up by the nuns.<sup>76</sup> When the convents were founded, the women entered on the negotiations themselves often in the teeth of local opposition. Mary Ward's correspondence is extensive, much of it in Latin.

The standard of education received by girls who decided not to become nuns, but to return to England and marriage, can be seen in the following cases. Anne Petre was educated by the sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (The Mary Ward Sisters) before deciding against the conventual life. She

---

<sup>74</sup> The Book of the Dead, ed. R Trappes-Lomax, Franciscana, Catholic Record Society, Vol. 24, 1924, pp188-9.

<sup>75</sup> Obituary Notices of Nuns of Benedictine Abbey of Ghent, CRS, 1917, p39.

<sup>76</sup> Obituary Notices of Nuns of Benedictine Abbey of Ghent, CRS, 1917, pp9, 11, 12 and 49. For details of Margaret Clement see; Preface to A Hamilton, 1904, Vol.I, pp4-5.

was described as a wise woman able to give medical advice to her neighbours. At school 'she was taught nothing that she did not learn in the greatest height of its perfection...'<sup>77</sup> Magdalen Prideaux, grand-daughter of Margaret Giggs and John Clement, who married William Copley and become mother to Mary and Helen (on p5) was educated at St Ursula's at Louvain. She was described as;

a fine musician both in song and instruments, had the Latin tongue perfect, also poetry, and was skilful in the art of painting, a woman indeed wise, and pious in godly matters.<sup>78</sup>

The problems for parents sending their daughters to these schools were considerable, but the need for the schools to produce educated girls able to become choir nuns or good Catholic mothers would suggest that Anne Petre and Magdalen Prideaux were not isolated examples.

#### Levels of education for women: suggested categories.

In order to be able to make comparisons and to try to draw conclusions it is helpful to establish broad bands of educational attainment. The analysis in this thesis has shown that it is essential to draw up gender specific categories. The women included are those whose educational level is known either from direct or indirect evidence and whose names were encountered during the course of this study. The total number of names included is 870.<sup>79</sup> The information is derived from the letter collections seen, published women, nuns, teachers and governesses, and women who are featured in biographies and other personal documents. It was decided not to include the names of women signing court depositions and wills as the

---

<sup>77</sup> WDA, AAW/A Vol. XXIX No.132, Life of Anne Petre.

<sup>78</sup> A Hamilton, 1904, Vol. I p112.

<sup>79</sup> The names are listed in the Appendix, p253.

samples were too small.

The proportion of Catholic women appearing in the list is high because of the number of nuns listed. The records of the early convents contain the names of many of the women who joined and some gave their parentage as well. This makes it possible to link the names of the women with their families in England and Wales and to trace families who were devout Catholics and interested in girls' education. Families whose names frequently appear in the study include Gage of Firle, Sussex, with their link to Hengrave in Suffolk, and Babthorpe of Osgodby linked to Ingleby of Ripley, both in Yorkshire. Choir nuns were included in level two if there was no additional evidence about their literacy on the grounds that reading literacy (including Latin) and singing were basic requirements for probationers and most were able to write their own names. Because the majority of the sources came from landed families, few women appear in category three or below. Evidence relating to girls' education outside the gentry and aristocracy suggests that most girls would fall into levels three, four and five. Further research is needed to understand the distribution of women in these categories.

#### Levels of education among women

A brief description of the educational level of one woman is given for the two top categories. The absence of personal documents for the other levels makes comparable analysis impossible. Wherever possible, dates have been given and the source of the educational information. In the case of nuns, the order is given. Where a woman has been located in a collection of family papers, the name of the collection has been given.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Others
124	489	230	27

Level one

This includes classical education, or the study of at least one modern foreign language; writers of published works, whether these are translations or original prose; original talent in music. Prolific writers whose work remained in manuscript are included in this category.

## Examples

Brilliana Harley, Elizabeth Shirley, Esther Inglis, Mary Herbert, Rachael Fane, Dorothy Leigh.

Esther Inglis, 1571-1624, the daughter of Huguenot refugees who settled in Edinburgh, earned a living as a calligrapher. She moved South in 1606 with her husband, Bartholomew Kello, which gave opportunities to seek patronage at Court. Esther Inglis used her maiden name throughout her career, and her husband on at least two occasions chased up payment for manuscripts.<sup>80</sup> The manuscripts are largely in French with many of the dedicatory verses in Latin. Some of the verses were written for her by Andrew Neville, Principal of Glasgow University, and Robert Pollock, Principal of Edinburgh University.<sup>81</sup> Esther Inglis was more than a copyist, she had intellectual friends prepared to write for her. There are 44 manuscripts extant; mainly selections of passages of the Old Testament and moral verse by the contemporary French poet Pybrac. Some of the manuscripts are tiny; in one book of octets each verse takes up no more than 1 square inch.<sup>82</sup> In the larger volumes she used a variety of styles of writing and prefaced them with introductory verses and a dedication; in several she included a self-portrait. While the language of

---

<sup>80</sup> Bartholomew Kello to Anthony Bacon, B L Add MS 4,125 f354; Bartholomew Kello to Queen Elizabeth, B L Add MS 4,125 f355. I am grateful to Mary Prior for these references.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, *Les Proverbes de Salomon*, 1599, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. 990; *Psalms of David*, 1599, Oxford, Christchurch MS CLXXX.

<sup>82</sup> *Quatrains de Guy de Faur*, écrits par E Inglis, 1615, B L Add MS 19,633.



the prefaces claimed modesty, the decision to include verse, even on one occasion linking her name with the Queen's, and the self-portrait makes a bold statement about her.<sup>83</sup> Although Esther Inglis' career does not appear to have been lucrative, (she left debts of £156 on her death,) she was a professional calligrapher whose work was popular with contemporaries.<sup>84</sup>

### Level two

Able to read and write in English and possibly cast accounts; able to write own letters either to conduct business affairs or communicate within the family; a musical education, even if the woman was unable to write her own letters, is included in this category.

### Examples

Magdalen Bagenall, Anne Wen Brinkir, Elizabeth Smyth, Mary Smith, Sydney Wynn, Dorothy Wadham, Frances, Countess of Exeter.

For Anne Wen Brinkir, as for many women whose names appear in this thesis, most of the evidence relating to her education comes from an analysis of the contents of her letters. Very little is known about her background, apart from the information revealed in the eight letters in the Clennau collection. Part of a Welsh land-owning family in Caernarvonshire, Anne Wen Brinkir had considerable skill at writing; using a small clear italic-style hand. Many of the letters are joined and there are few loops. The hand is remarkably similar to Lady Jane Maurice's, her sister-in-law. Several of her letters are long; covering at least two pages

---

<sup>83</sup> See for example the poem dedicatory in the Christchurch Manuscript; Thus while I the English Esther paint the English Elizabeth,  
I paint with my intellect and mind the heaven wandering goddess...  
Christchurch MS CLXXX. I am grateful to Dr Doreen Innes of St Hilda's College, Oxford for her translation of this poem.

<sup>84</sup> David Laing, Notes on Esther Inglis, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Vol. VI, Dec. 1865, p307.

with about 38 lines per page. The spelling has internal consistency and causes no difficulty of understanding. The meaning of the sentences is also clear. The letters relate mainly to estate business on behalf of her brother, Sir William Maurice of Clennau. Sir William's wife, Jane also wrote letters to him; but they are pre-occupied with a dispute with her son by her previous marriage and indicate no involvement by her in estate business. Anne Wen Brinkir was a capable, confident administrator, able to take decisions herself and to give her brother advice. She wrote to him; 'for any other matters heere att home: take yow no care for god willinge I will do what I am able till death.'<sup>85</sup> She advised her brother on local politics; organising a meeting with members of the extended family including a cousin, Maurice Jones, and her daughter, Margaret, to discuss a jury problem. They resolved in the end, to seek advice from another woman, Lady Eure, a family connection. Anne Wen Brinkir gave direct advice to her brother on how to try to secure favours when he was beset by legal troubles in the Council of the Marches and elsewhere in 1604. She even advised him to use his contacts at Court and to approach the king directly. At the same time, Anne Wen Brinkir mentioned family matters in her letters, including the sending of tokens and good wishes, and purchases, such as spices, eels and garden seeds that she wanted her brother to make for her in London.<sup>86</sup> Her letters reveal wide-ranging interests, and a high level of practical skill. Many of the other letter-writers in this category did not have such a high level of literacy skills, but were nevertheless able to conduct public business or participate in the management of family affairs, or simply maintain contact with members of the extended family.

### Level three

---

<sup>85</sup> Anne Wen Brinkir to Sir William Maurice, NLW, Clennau Papers, No. 372, undated.

<sup>86</sup> Anne Wen Brinkir to her brother Sir William Maurice, NLW, Clennau Papers, Nos. 204, 323, 372, 385, 386, 431, 452, 453, 1604-21.

Able to sign name and by inference read printed books. Women in this level may have been taught to write, but they did not write the letters seen in the course of this study. Lay sisters in Convents are included in this level as they were expected to have some teaching.

#### Examples

Joan Barrington, Magdalen Montague, Elizabeth Raleigh, Mary Cheke, Ruth Lamplugh, Margaret Trevor.

Within this category, it is more difficult to discuss the literacy of one or two women to illustrate their educational background. As this chapter has demonstrated, letter-writers did not always write for themselves; they might use the services of a scribe. The signature, if confident, might indicate sufficient skill to be able to write a whole letter in other circumstances. A very shaky hand, or uncertain letters might indicate the epitome of achievement, and that the signers would not be able to write letters for themselves. It is difficult to draw conclusions about how far the women in this category participated in the public sphere. Although there is evidence that many of them were conversant with patronage and influence, much would have depended on the level of literacy represented in the signature, their social position and wealth. Evidence from other sources is particularly useful in this category to support signature evidence. In the Barrington family, Elizabeth Huberd, Ann Underwoode, Mary Whalley, Lece Procter, Ruth Lamplugh only signed their names. Two of these, Lady Ruth Lamplugh, who was Joan Barrington's daughter and Mary Whalley, her niece, were brought up as part of the Barrington household and would have the expectations of gentry women with similar access to the extended family and influence. In some collections, single letters were from women who had served in the household for a time and were seeking a favour, and were not in a position to offer anything themselves.

Level four

Women who received some teaching; it may have been only for a limited amount of time and it may have been technical training only, for example spinning or needlework; the content and level of attainment unspecified. Women in this category may only be able to sign initials and have little occasion to use writing skills as adults.

Very few women were found in this category in the study, because of the nature of the sources used. Girls outside the gentry classes were much more likely to fall into this category. Margaret Clitherow, the Catholic martyr, daughter of a sheriff of the city, was not taught to read and write as a girl, but learned how to read and write English in prison. In the Norwich census of the poor of 1571, girls are shown to have received some training in spinning and weaving in schools.<sup>87</sup>

Level five

Women able to make a mark only: nothing known about schooling. Women in this category will be found when surveys of depositions and other court records are made. In this study few references were found to women of this level, except in the complaints about school teachers and in the small sample of depositions for London. (see p168)

For many of the women in the Appendix, there was enough evidence to allocate them to a level, but in some cases there was insufficient evidence to indicate which level was the appropriate band for a particular woman. For example it proved difficult to allocate nuns precisely. The distinction between black or choir nuns who knew Latin and white nuns or lay-sisters who may not have done, was not always clear in the

---

<sup>87</sup> Norwich Census of the Poor 1570, ed. John F Pound, *Norfolk Record Society*, XL, 1971.

evidence. In the case of women who only appear as a name at the end of one letter, without any background information being known, they are allocated to the level relating to the writing skill shown on that occasion, which may not represent their true educational standard. Where two levels are given in the Appendix, the first was counted for statistical purposes.

It is important not to consider the levels in isolation; they need to be used in conjunction with the analysis of the letter collections before any conclusions are reached. The names in the list are derived from a wide-ranging but random survey, but they offer some preliminary views of the levels of women's education in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

### Conclusions

Evidence from the letter collections shows that in the sample of 13 gentry families, the majority of women at the centre of these families and many of their female relations were able to read and write and were sufficiently confident in their skills to send letters. Many of them were frequent correspondents, maintaining contact with members of the extended family and liaising with their husbands or male relatives about estate and farming business, although the number of letters from women is significantly lower than for men. Evidence from other families indicates that the levels of competence in literacy in these families was not unusual, and that they were broadly representative of the experience of other families of a similar social background. This suggests that the majority of gentry women were literate to some degree and many were educated to a significant level, which gave them much more than basic competence.

The style of women's handwriting in the personal documents was much more frequently cursive or italic script: secretary hand was rarely used. Women's writing was generally less fluent and

competent, being more uneven than male handwriting. This indicates a shorter period of teaching than for boys and less practice. The lack of teaching and practice is also reflected in their spelling which tends to be more erratic than men's. However, the analysis of the contents of the letters carried out in Chapters Two, Three, Four, and Six below, shows that in spite of the lack of practical skill, many women wrote significant numbers of letters over a period of time on a variety of topics.

A preliminary analysis of women's reading interests and habits can be made from the references to books and other reading material in letters, accounts and other personal documents. There are more frequent references to devotional literature in women's letters and personal documents in this study than to other books. However, the number of practical advice books on household and family medical matters published suggests that this was a growing market among women readers. Historians have already shown the importance of women as literary patrons and dedicatees.

The number of nuns identified in the study reveals a high level of interest in girls' education as well as religious devotion among Catholic gentry families, since most of their education took place before they presented themselves to the convents as probationers.

The figures regarding the levels of literacy derived from the study confirm not only the high level of education of many women of the gentry and aristocratic classes, but also show that religion was not a factor in explaining the variations in educational standards among girls of the same class. Taken with the evidence from Chapter Two, the figures show that more girls were educated from the first decades of the seventeenth century. Chapter Six will examine the implications of literacy for the roles of women.

## CHAPTER 6

WOMEN AS INTERMEDIARIES, MANAGERS AND BENEFACTORS: A STUDY  
OF THE OUTCOMES OF LITERACY

Previous chapters have shown that over the latter part of the sixteenth century increasing numbers of women learned to read and write. The evidence from this study suggests that by 1620, the majority of gentry women were taught to read and many were able to write. Their education enabled them to become more active in the maintenance of networks of influence and in the management of family assets: it also gave them independent access to the public sphere beyond the household and all the information available in print. Chapter Two, which included a study of parental attitudes, showed how most parents educated their daughters for marriage and Chapter Four while discussing the role of women in marriage, offered a preliminary overview of the activities of literate wives. In order to evaluate the outcomes of girls' education, this chapter will consider the activities of literate women, both married and single, mainly from the gentry, in greater depth. It will take three key areas: firstly, intervention in informal political networks as intermediaries, secondly, in estate and farm management, and finally, as educational founders and benefactors. In the first section, the use that women made of their literacy to make contacts both within and outside the family networks on behalf of third parties will be examined. The participation of women in the management of the family estates and farms will be assessed in order to evaluate the degree of their involvement in decision making. The final section will consider the question of how far lay-women and nuns as educational benefactors, sought to expand the educational opportunities open to girls and the skills they revealed in the process of founding religious houses.

It has already been argued in Chapter Two that one of the overriding concerns of parents was to ensure that their daughters remained conventionally submissive and deferent in spite of their education. By examining the activities of adult women, particularly at times when, as widows and unmarried women, they were able to act independently, it is possible to consider the success or failure of parental attempts to bring up daughters to conform to the expectations of their husbands or in the case of nuns, to maintain or even to strengthen the Catholic church.

### Women as Intermediaries

The recognition that women could be useful as a means of linking a marriage partnership to the wider family network, able to secure favours or influence, can be seen in the detail of marriage negotiations (see Chapter Three). Parents appreciated the importance of family connections when choosing a marriage partner for their children. If either partner were well-connected, a smaller financial settlement might be arranged. The pay-off could arrive after marriage with access to the wider kin network of contacts. The correspondence shows that women as well as men understood the informal power networks. Literacy added to the opportunities available to women to participate in the distribution of patronage and to promote relatives in a variety of ways, including recommendations for appointments, obtaining loans and acting as intermediaries between supplicants and those who had authority or power. In some cases women acted on behalf of third parties from outside the kin network, thus further extending their influence.

Most of the gentry women made contacts within the counties where they owned land. Wealth and confidence expanded the possibilities for women to make contacts outside the family and exercise influence more widely. At the highest level this can clearly be seen in Elizabeth's Court. Pam Wright has shown



that Elizabeth increased the number of women appointed to the Privy Chamber, mainly with domestic responsibilities, and that these posts gave them considerable influence at the centre of court politics.<sup>1</sup> Although women were not to be found in formal salaried offices, nevertheless they could, and did, secure decisions favourable to their clients provided they operated informally within the limits allowed them by the Queen and did not seek to challenge her authority. In her unpublished thesis, Charlotte Merton, using in most cases different sources from those in this study, reached similar conclusions regarding the activities of women of the Court.<sup>2</sup>

Barbara Harris' article, discussed on p23, showed how women, mainly from an aristocratic background, participated in informal patronage networks in the early sixteenth century, although she did not comment on the literacy of the women sending letters. Such activity, both within and outside Court circles, continued and expanded in the period under consideration here.

A search of family correspondence and the papers of the great officers of state such as Sir Julius Caesar has revealed many examples of women's involvement in attempts both to secure favourable decisions in courts under his direction and in the distribution of patronage. The evidence from the letters of gentry women discussed in Chapters Three and Five, suggests that literacy had led to an expanded role for women in both the public and private spheres and the wider social group represented here may well be a result of that increasing literacy. The ability to write their own letters, gave them personal access to the public world outside the immediate household and they were able to participate in the informal patronage networks on their own account more easily.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pam Wright, 'A change in direction: the ramifications of a female household, 1558-1603,' in David Starkey, ed., *The English Court*, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte I Merton, 'The women who served Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth: ladies, gentlemen and maids of the Privy Chamber', Unpublished PhD, University of Cambridge, 1992.

## Women of the Court

The correspondence shows not only the breadth of the interests of court ladies, but also the depth of many women's understanding of how patronage worked. Letters sent to some of the ladies of the court show that men clearly appreciated the part they could play in obtaining the desired result at the highest level. In August 1588 Peregrine, Lord Willoughby wrote from Middleburgh in the Netherlands to Lady Stafford at Court:

Madame: having once disliked her Majestie with my letters, I am so discouraged as I dare not adventure my duetifull good meaning to my bad inditing. And therefore I come to you (as at second hand, but my first meanes) to let her Majestie understand, that yf my hand simply in declaring a simple trueth offended her, the same hand shall geve her satisfacion against her enemies.<sup>3</sup>

He went on to give detailed news about the preparations in the Netherlands for the invasion of England by the Duke of Parma. In this case a woman was used for the conveying of sensitive and unpopular information to the Queen.<sup>4</sup>

The giving of a present at New Year was carefully calculated by those involved in the distribution of patronage. It showed the importance of the recipient to the donor, and it was a tangible indication of the social level at which the donor was making contacts with people who might be useful in the future. In 1590 Julius Caesar sent New Year's gifts to, among others, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Treasurer and the Countess of Nottingham. He wrote to the Countess; 'I beseech your ladyship to accept it in good part, as from him whose service in one

---

<sup>3</sup> B L Harleian MS 6,994 f130. There are several examples of occasions when women passed on important information at Court. In 1597, Anne Countess of Warwick reported back to her nephew, Sir Robert Sidney, Governor of Flushing, on how the Queen received the news of the defeat of the Spanish... 'she is verie gladd of [it], although she will not thank you for your being there...' B L Add MS 15,552 f5.

<sup>4</sup> For another example of a man using a woman as intermediary, see the case of Sir Julius Caesar and Anne Countess of Warwick in B L Lansdowne MS 157 f26, Dec. 1589.

day to my Lord hath bene, and shall be, of greater valewe then all the new yer's gifts to be given this yere.'<sup>5</sup> Sir Julius Caesar appeared to be in no doubt as to the value of the services that were provided by the Countess of Warwick and the Countess of Nottingham, and the evidence suggests that they were not considered unusual by their contemporaries both male and female.

In addition to those who accepted presents as sufficient reward, there were women whose influence could be bought for money. In 1602 Robert Cecil wrote to his secretary, Mr Hicks, directing him how to deal with Lady Anne Glemham, daughter of the Lord Treasurer who was a regular intermediary:

I am very glad you have chosen Mr Grevill and I will do all I can... go...in any wise to my Lady Glemmam give her purse of a £100 so she will win her father to you which you may say you will no further trouble them to give you his favour...You must tell Glemmam...she must (deal) so directly with the Treasurer for her £100 or els she may cosin you.'<sup>6</sup>

The tone of the letter makes it clear that there was a recognised way of approaching the Lord Treasurer through his daughter. It also suggests that Lady Glemham was not always a reliable intermediary. The numerous letters from Lady Glemham to be found among Julius Caesar's correspondence show that she acted as an intermediary on behalf of clients previously unknown to her, introduced by a third party as well as friends and acquaintances, an indication that her ability to act as a channel for supplicants to the Master of Requests was known outside her family. Since the letters that remain are the ones passing on the client's request for assistance, there was no mention of whether she expected to receive financial reward

---

<sup>5</sup> B L Lansdowne MS 157 f8, Jan. 1590.

<sup>6</sup> B L Lansdowne MS 88, f105, 1603. Lionel Cranfield, who became Lord Treasurer, also used Anne Glemham as an intermediary, lending her money and offering substantial gifts as a reward. CKS, U269/1 CB304, 1607. Dorothy Edmonds managed to obtain £200 from Anthony Bacon for acting as an intermediary in 1595; Charlotte I Merton, 1992, pp176-8.

for her services, although the evidence from the Robert Cecil letter suggests that this was a normal part of the procedure.<sup>7</sup> It was not only the intermediary who expected to benefit, as one letter written by Anne Glemham to Julius Caesar made clear.

Sir, I have so often troubled you with suits, rather of charritable nature then of any profitt, as I am glad that there is any good occasion offred to show my good will to you. And as the matter is in it self reasonable according to my understanding, so shall you have VIII score pounds truly paid you on my honore and faith when it is under the brode seale.<sup>8</sup>

#### Aristocratic Women

Aristocratic women were engaged in similar kinds of transactions as women of the Court, although they did not have direct personal access to the Queen and they may not have been close to the main sources of patronage. Like the intermediaries among women of the Court, they understood enough of the workings of the courts and bureaucracy to approach the appropriate officials.

Thomas Cartwright, the Puritan divine, writing from the Fleet prison in August 1591 to Lady Russell who offered to intercede on his behalf with the Lord Treasurer, reveals a relationship with an intermediary not based on money, but on mutual interests. Having quoted Greek to her he wrote 'besides the mark of learning in yorselfe rare in your sex that is also worthie commendacion that you favour those which are learned or rather (meaning myself) which desire to be learned.' The letter continued with a spiritual examination of himself and a report of his time in prison complaining of his ill-treatment. He thanked her for her interest in him and concluded:

---

<sup>7</sup> B L Lansdowne MS 158, ff4, 76, 78, 80, 82, 86, 88, 90, 92, and B L Add MS 12,506, ff329, 331, 365, 442.

<sup>8</sup> B L Add MS 12,506, f331, Nov. 1604.

I will make an end leaving all to your honorable consideracion what to keepe to yourselfe and what to communicate to his Lordship what to ask or what to leave unasked: that is to say what you thinck his Lordship can convenientlie and with his good liking effect.<sup>9</sup>

Lady Russell was a sympathetic patron sharing the religious views and academic interests of the man she was trying to help. The letter was sent on to the Lord Treasurer marked on the cover 'Good my Lord rede this thorow and do what good yow can to the poore man.' Thomas Cartwright trusted her judgment in dealing with the Lord Treasurer by leaving her so much latitude in the negotiations. This in itself is an indication that she was experienced in such matters even when they were religious questions of some delicacy.

Women were quite prepared to use contacts to assist relatives. Mary Herbert, Lady Pembroke, wrote to the Lord Treasurer trying to obtain leave for her brother-in-law Robert Sidney in Flushing. It was reported to Sidney...

My Lady Pembroke...hast taken occasion to wryte again and renew her suite to my Lord Treasurer. The copies of her letter unto him she did vouchsafe to send unto me of her own handwriting. I never reade anything that could express an earnest desire like unto this.<sup>10</sup>

She wrote several times, but war intervened and Robert was not granted leave. On this occasion it appears that Robert Sidney's correspondent was impressed by Lady Pembroke's skill in writing and considered it possible that this might have some influence on the outcome.

On the whole, women's letters seeking favours make few

---

<sup>9</sup> B L Lansdowne MS 68, ff131v-132r.

<sup>10</sup> M P Hannay, *Philip's Phoenix: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke*, 1990, p147.

references to the gender of the writer, but natural sympathy for the plight of a widow was invoked on several occasions particularly where straitened circumstances threatened to create severe problems.<sup>11</sup> William Cecil, Lord Burghley as Secretary of State received a number of letters from women requesting assistance. In 1565, Lady Mary Gray, who was seeking to return to Court asked for his help in securing the Queen's favour, 'whiche is in this worlde the greatest thyng that I desier.'<sup>12</sup> Lady Elizabeth Chandos wrote in 1559 about the behaviour of her son-in-law George Throckmorton who was in dispute with her daughter. She complained that he had attempted to suborn witnesses and 'his frends have most shamefully reported to certayne of the counsell that his wyfe hath geven hym such things to drynk as dyd make hym madd' and as a result 'hys wyfe hathe ever sence bene kept in close prisone where no man nor woman hathe come at her but only her keeper'<sup>13</sup>

Both Jane, Countess of Westmorland and Margaret, Countess of Lennox and Angus wrote to Burghley on behalf of their husbands, imprisoned by the Queen because of their involvement with the cause of Mary Queen of Scots. The Earl of Westmorland was heavily implicated in the rebellion of the Northern Earls of 1569: Jane wrote a very humble letter begging Burghley to act as her suitor to the Queen.<sup>14</sup> The Earl and Countess of Lennox were accused of involvement in the marriage between Mary Queen of Scots and their son Lord Darnley, an English

---

<sup>11</sup> See for example; B L Add MS 45,224 f37. In 1597 Lady Hungerford who had been recently widowed wrote to William Burghley because her brother-in-law had taken over the whole estate including her jointure. Unfortunately on her marriage she had been persuaded to pass over the papers relating to it and she needed assistance in proving her case.

<sup>12</sup> PRO, SPD Eliz. XXXVII, Item 65.

<sup>13</sup> PRO, SPD Eliz. VI Item 24. In another case where a mother was trying to protect her pregnant daughter in a marital dispute, Elizabeth Molyne wrote in 1590 to Lady Buckhurst asking her to intercede with her husband. This is one of several examples where a woman as supplicant wrote to another as intermediary showing that they clearly understood how the arrangement worked. Bodleian, MS Eng. Hist. C474 f132.

<sup>14</sup> B L Lansdowne MS 12 f61.

subject, which had taken place without Elizabeth's permission. In July 1562 Margaret, Countess of Lennox wrote to Burghley explaining that she was not aware of having committed any offence 'except yt were for the scolmaster goying in to Skotland without the quens majestys leve', but that she willingly submitted to her majesty and trusted that her lord would do the same if he had not done so already.<sup>15</sup> The Countess sent twenty one letters to Burghley to try to secure the release of her husband from the Tower and to ask other favours on his behalf.

The desperate situation of a wife whose husband faced long-term imprisonment in the Tower or possibly execution can also be seen in the moving letters sent by Elizabeth Raleigh in 1592 and by Frances, Lady Essex after the failure of her husband's plot against the Queen in 1601.<sup>16</sup> Lady Essex appealed via Robert Cecil to the Queen for mercy for her husband on behalf of herself and her child:

I beeseech you even for your vertues sake, performe this noble office for mee and to joyne with the rest of your Lordships of the councell in presentinge my humblest supplicacion to her Majestie. Here Sir I pray you with theise tedious blotts from her feeble hand and sad sick harte that is stored with much thankfullness...

A marginal note continued...

good Mr Secretary even as you desire of god that your owne sonne never be made orphan by the untimely or unnaturall death of his deere father vouchsafe a relentinge to the not urginge if you may not to the hindringe of that fatill warrant for execution which if it be on[c]e signed I shall never wish to breath

---

<sup>15</sup> PRO, SPD Eliz. XXIII Item 59.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Raleigh to Sir Moyle Finch: quoted in Dorothy M Meads, 1928, p883.

one houre after.<sup>17</sup>

Sadly for Frances the appeal failed: her husband's crime had been too serious for clemency to be granted even to a former favourite.

There was criticism of the women's activities as intermediaries, mainly for the misuse of their opportunities rather than for participating in the first place. In other words, it was generally accepted that women could take part in the distribution of patronage but that there were certain norms of behaviour which should not be transgressed. Lady Anne Sidney, (Mary's sister) married to Sir William FitzWilliam, acquired an unsavoury reputation in Ireland among her detractors for using family connections to advance her own and her husband's interests excessively.<sup>18</sup> George Boleyn wrote to one of his cousins, the Earl of Shrewsbury, accusing another cousin, Lady Scudamore of causing unnecessary delays, but her position as Mistress of the Robes and the closeness of her relationship to the Queen made her a valuable intermediary. Robert Cecil at the turn of the century was sceptical of the value of women as intermediaries. Writing to Sir Robert Cross he recalled...

your speech to me in your chamber at Nonsuch some three years past which was that I depended and was at charge with women to solicit for me and that the queen would give them good words yet they should never effect suit. I have found that to be true advice.<sup>19</sup>

#### Gentry Women

---

<sup>17</sup> B L Lansdowne MS 88 f28.

<sup>18</sup> C Brady, *Political Women and Reform in Tudor Ireland*, pp82-3 in Margaret MacCurtain and Mary O'Dowd, eds., 1991.

<sup>19</sup> Pam Wright, 1987, pp161 and 160.



Gentry women also used kinship networks to try to secure influence, generally on behalf of a member of their immediate family. They were prepared to approach the great officers of state where they considered it necessary, and they made use of relatives who were in a position to be helpful. It must be remembered that even for men of the gentry class of this period, social contacts outside the immediate family were restricted. Hassell-Smith established that Sir Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey in Norfolk, had practically no social contact with other gentry in the county outside his own family.<sup>20</sup> Even so, where women's letters have survived in collections, the numbers that remain suggest that such letters were not uncommon among the gentry in the period under consideration, although as with Nathaniel Bacon, they were written mainly to other members of the kinship network.<sup>21</sup>

The Trevor family network was extensive: they owned estates in North Wales, Cheshire and Sussex. Relations experiencing problems of one kind or another made good use of the eminence in London of Sir John Trevor I and his son Sir John Trevor II. Both father and son held court appointments and were well placed to secure advantages for their relatives. In the 1630s Jane Fitton of Gawsorth, Cheshire, sister of Sir John Trevor II, (whose problems with her husband were discussed on pp118-9), wrote frequently to her brother asking his advice. It was generally for herself, although she also wrote in 1634 to Sir John on her husband's behalf asking him to secure assistance

---

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in C E Moreton, *The Townshends and their World: Gentry, Law, and Land in Norfolk, c.1450-1551*, 1992, fn. 160 pp26-7.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Dorothy Cockayne and Mary Holcroft to the Lord Keeper Sir John Puckering. B L Harleian MS 6,996 f138 and f95. Dorothy Cockayne wrote in 1594 on behalf of a poor servant who was suffering delays in an action, asking for a speedy decision. Mary Holcroft, describing herself as a poor distressed gentlewoman, asked for assistance in obtaining a recompense after being in service for twenty five years. Elizabeth Kytson of Hengrave Hall wrote to Elizabeth, Lord Burghley's daughter asking her to intercede with her father to improve the conditions of imprisonment of her Uncle, William Cor lately arrived in England. CUL, Hengrave 88, Vol. II No. 99, c.1600.

for him in his financial difficulties.<sup>22</sup>

Magdalen Bagenall from Anglesey, Jane Fitton's cousin, was at the centre of an extensive network of male contacts which extended across North Wales to London. The correspondence with her cousin Sir John Trevor, who was her main point of contact in London, remains in the Trevor Papers, but she relied on others to effect her business as well. Most of the men named in her letters were related to her, such as Uncle Baron Trevor, Sir Edward Trevor, and her cousin Dr Robert White, but they also included Lord Grandison, Sir Arthur Tyringham and Sir Robert Yaxley. Large sums of money were mentioned in the course of this correspondence. For example, she was engaged in obtaining the bishopric of Bangor for Robert White. With her cousin she had to arrange for the disbursement of £500 to try to secure the post without the expenditure becoming public knowledge. If it had, she said, it would have risked the successful outcome of the arrangement.<sup>23</sup> It was a very large sum of money to be under the control of a woman, but the letter she wrote gives the impression that she was, with her cousin, well in control of the situation. The Bagenall family owned estates in Ireland and Magdalen Bagenall was concerned to maintain the family influence there too. She approached Sir John Trevor in 1624, to obtain a posting for her husband in Ireland at the head of a company of foot and horse. Magdalen Bagenall was prepared to raise half the £1000 needed on her own account.

At Ashton Court near Bristol, Elizabeth Smyth/Gorges took an active role, not only in managing the estates but also exploiting resources to sustain an informal network of influential contacts. The names appearing in Elizabeth Smyth's letters included Sir George Juey, Lord Harbord, Sir John Beron and Sir Robert Howard. These were men who visited the house

---

<sup>22</sup> ESRO, GLYnde 558.

<sup>23</sup> ESRO, GLYnde 566.

and whose good-will was preserved with gifts of game from the park.<sup>24</sup>

Elizabeth Ashburnham a widow, part of the well-connected Dering family in Kent, wrote to her son in 1625 describing her efforts to obtain a borough seat for him in the new Parliament. The rest of the letter details the contacts she made in London on her son's behalf, and showed that she appreciated the importance of maintaining family relationships by the marking of special occasions such as christenings. She wrote...

I was also with my Lord of Dorsett to remember your service & thanks who purposeth to send you shortly a Christning remembrance with a deale of complement, and hath promised me, to speake effectually in favor of you to my Lord. I was also with my Lord Keeper the new to get a Burdgeship, but all too late.<sup>25</sup>

Another member of the family, Frances Finch reported the successful conclusion of business for her uncle, Sir Anthony Dering in 1626 and was reclaiming the money she had laid out on his behalf. When she added together all the expenses for obtaining a warrant for him they came to £3/4/6.<sup>26</sup>

It is perhaps not surprising that these women of the gentry class acted most frequently for the benefit of their family. Whereas women of the Court had importance recognised by potential clients who were not relatives, women outside these ranks were rarely in a position to exercise influence on behalf of a third party, except at a local level. Their social links tended to be within the extended family, which for some women, such as Magdalen Bagenall, meant a network whose

---

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Gorges to her son Tom, BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court, AC/C48/15, 1629.

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Ashburnham to her son-in-law Edward Dering, CKS, U 350 C 2/7, 1625.

<sup>26</sup> CKS, U 350 C 2/11, 1626.

tentacles were widespread. Women appear to have had little hesitation in using contacts for furthering the interest of kin. It was one of the important functions of the family to look after its members and literacy enabled women to participate more extensively in this.

#### Women as estate managers

The ability to write their own letters and to read relevant books gave women a much greater knowledge of farming practice and estate management than they would be able to acquire orally. The acquisition of this knowledge led to changes in the roles they were able to fulfil in some families. As the chapter on wives has shown, both the prescriptive literature and the evidence of letters indicate that the patriarchal structure of the family changed little over the course of the sixteenth century, although there is evidence of increasing companionship between husband and wife. One result of this closeness was a growing awareness of the individual skills of women in a number of the families in this study. In these families, wives were encouraged by their husbands to participate more fully and directly in the management of the family estates. A comparison between the management skills of men as outlined in Heal and Holmes' *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*, and those of the women seen in the correspondence studied, shows that the women were more limited in their knowledge of agricultural matters. They operated as the junior partners at a level where most were granted only restricted freedom to act. However, the women estate managers found in this study were vigorous in their pursuit of family interests and made substantial contributions to the success of the enterprises.

Management of landed estates by women was not new: there is evidence from the middle ages, mainly the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, that some women, usually widows, were

powerful and successful estate managers.<sup>27</sup> In the medieval period, most of the women concerned did not write their own letters, although many were able to read. Jennifer Ward's study of noblewomen, showed that a few women were active in every area of estate management and in many instances, successful in maximising the revenue from the lands. Lady Elizabeth de Burgh in the fourteenth century, a widow for over 38 years, maintained her position, energetically managing her estates spread across England, Wales and Ireland. She bought and sold land, directed farming policy and kept an eye on relevant political developments.<sup>28</sup> In most examples given by Ward, the women had oversight of the estate and household and made final decisions, but the lack of documentary sources prevents the historian from knowing how far women were concerned with the daily operation. In the middle ages as in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, frequently, husbands had to spend time away from home; and in many cases wives assumed some responsibility for managing the farm or the estate in their absence.

The documents from the families studied in this research, showed that the ability of the women to write letters, provides detailed evidence of women's activities in managing estates, and secondly shows that literacy allowed them to participate more closely in management. Examples of woman managers from the latter part of the sixteenth century are more numerous than Jennifer Ward found in her study of the earlier period. Within the group of family papers studied the most active participation of women in estate management is found among the Smyth of Ashton Court papers, Barrington, Coke, Clennenau, Trevor, Hengrave and Harley papers: in addition the printed letters of Joan and Maria Thynne contain much information relating to estate management. In some

---

<sup>27</sup> See for example, Jennifer C Ward, *English Noblewomen in the later Middle Ages*, London, Longman, 1992.

<sup>28</sup> J Ward, 1992, p42, and Chapter 6, pp108-28.

families it was a single woman for whom evidence remains; in others, such as the Ashton Court papers, five women across several generations and the extended family were involved. In some papers, for example the Paston/Knyvett/Gawdy group, few references to estate management or farming were found. Many of the women did take an interest in their husbands' affairs but the letters contain much more about family matters. This suggests that there was little expectation on the part of the men in these families that the women should participate in estate or farm management. Although there are many letters demonstrating women's participation in estate management in the absence of their husbands, there are insufficient letters to discuss the question of how far the women continued to be involved once their husbands were at home. In families such as the Thynne and the Bagenall families, with larger estates split into several portions and spread possibly over several counties separation was likely to happen quite frequently. The level of competence shown by many of the women indicates lengthy experience of management.

The extent of the participation of individual women in the families studied, varied greatly and depended on four main factors: the personal interests of the wife, her skills, the attitude of the husband and the age and sex of the heir. Some husbands reserved final decision making to themselves; their wives sent them advice and information but the husbands had executive authority.<sup>29</sup> Some women revealed in the letters a substantial technical knowledge of farming, understanding stocking policies, quantities of feedstuff required and the legal background of leases.<sup>30</sup> On most estates studied, a steward or manager was employed in charge of administration: the woman's involvement was over and above this. In each case noted, the steward had direct contact with the wife of the

---

<sup>29</sup> See for example, Joan Thynne below.

<sup>30</sup> See for example, Mary Coke and Ju Barrington discussed below.

employer.<sup>31</sup> This suggests that the women who undertook to represent the family in estate business did so out of personal interest; the work of managing the large household that was part of an estate was sufficient to fill their time and keep them busy, without the additional supervision of land management. Several widows managed estates on behalf of their young sons.<sup>32</sup> Some widows with estates, for example Lettice Offaly and Anne Clifford, decided not to remarry and continued to manage their lands themselves.<sup>33</sup> If a son was of the age to act as substitute for his father away on business, it was more likely that he would manage the estate than his mother.<sup>34</sup>

Elizabeth Smyth managed Ashton Court on behalf of her son Thomas, who became an MP. Thomas, aged 18, married Florence Poulett aged 15 in 1627 just before the death of his father. He was thus young and inexperienced. Even after Elizabeth Smyth remarried, she continued to look after the estate, concerning herself with the country and also Bristol interests in shipping and property. Her involvement made it possible for the young couple to spend time together because she combined estate management with bringing up her grandchildren. Her letters demonstrate a firm grasp not only of farming but also of legal problems, the value of land and the selection of

---

<sup>31</sup> Sir Thomas Barrington employed John Kendall, John Smyth was employed by the Berkeleys in Gloucestershire, Thomas Brasbrydge was employed by Henry Knollys and continued to work for his widow Margaret, (leaving an extensive correspondence in the British Library), John Matteson worked for Sir Arthur and Lady Mary Ingram in Yorkshire, W Vernons was steward for the Savile family of Rufford in Nottinghamshire.

<sup>32</sup> Jane Smyth of Ashton Court managed the estates on behalf of her young son Hugh between 1583 and her death in 1594. It is not possible to be certain about her literacy, because there is only one of her letters in existence and it appears to be written by a secretary. BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court Papers AC/C 34, 1583. Mary Myddleton 1598-1675, managed the Chirk Castle estates on behalf of her grandson, Thomas, 1666-1672.

<sup>33</sup> Lettice Offaly was a widow for 18 years managing property in both England and Ireland. See Caroline Bowden, 'Venetia Digby...a perfect wife?', in ed. A Sumner, *Death, Passion and Politics*, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1995, p42. Anne Clifford after her claim to her inheritance had succeeded in 1643, moved to her property in 1649 and vigorously managed it until her death in 1676. See ed. D J H Clifford, 1992, p100 seq.

<sup>34</sup> In the Verney family, it was Ralph who managed the family estates while his father Sir Edmund was away on Court business. Miriam Slater, 1984, p31.

tenants. Gradually Thomas' wife Florence, herself became involved in the estate, although her letters do not show the same understanding of management.<sup>35</sup>

The letters and memoranda from the women relating to estate business can be read and analysed on several levels. On the one hand they indicate the direct involvement of the women in the various farm activities at different times of the year, and on the other they show the degrees of responsibility taken by women. Some women, such as Joan Thynne, had a detailed knowledge both of farming and the legal processes connected with land. In other families the degree of skill and knowledge revealed in the women's letters was more limited. These women, such as Brilliana Harley and Florence Smyth, in their letters indicated a general understanding of farming, but they did not take decisions on their own initiative, referring these back to their husbands.<sup>36</sup> A third group of women, including Unton Dering, expressed no direct interest in estate matters at all in their letters.

The nature of the relationship between husband and wife is apparent from most of the letters dealing with estate matters. The training of girls by their parents to respect male authority was effective. Some of the husbands in the study clearly valued the contribution their wives made and were even prepared to accept advice from them.<sup>37</sup> Others, for example Sir Thomas Barrington, were approached more circuitously. Ju Barrington was one of the most knowledgeable and forthright women encountered in the study, but she was tactful in the way she requested her steward, John Kendall to ensure that her

---

<sup>35</sup> BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court, Elizabeth Smyth/Gorges to her son Thomas, AC48 1-28, Florence Smyth to Thomas, AC/60 1-22.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, the letters from Brillian Harley to her husband Sir Robert, B L Add MS 70,110, unfoliated, 1620s.

<sup>37</sup> Florence Smyth advised her husband Thomas, see particularly BRO Smyth of Ashton Court AC/60 16. It was Ann Wen Brynkir who advised her brother Sir William Maurice on the management of his estate, rather than his wife Jane, see the discussion on pp197-8 above.



husband thought a transaction was his idea. She had no qualms about telling Kendall directly how to conduct business.<sup>38</sup>

There is sufficient detail in women's letters to construct an outline of the main farming processes in the late sixteenth century. Attached to the large country houses were farms which supplied the household and produced surplus for sale. This means that in order to keep their families adequately provided for, women needed a basic knowledge of farming. Many of the women writing letters knew much more than this. In the Autumn, Joan Thynne worried about having seed corn to sow and getting it into the ground at the right time, although she, like Bridget Phelips and Mary Coke, did sow some spring corn too.<sup>39</sup> The price of corn was discussed by several women in their letters.<sup>40</sup> The process of producing corn for the market took place in two stages; first it was cut and stacked and later in the year it was threshed. Both operations were labour intensive and recruitment of good workers could be difficult for a woman. The logistics of moving the corn to obtain the best price were complex. Mary Coke reported to her husband that she could not get corn threshed to send to market unless she sent barley or peas as well as the corn.<sup>41</sup> The implication seemed to be that she was being given a hard time bargaining and needed male support. Hay harvest involved many similar problems; much could go wrong, apart from the weather. Florence Smyth commented to her husband Tom on the number of mice in the cut hay and the difficulties of employing good

---

<sup>38</sup> See for example the Memorandum for London: Michlemus Terme: 1632, written in Judith Barrington's own hand for John Kendall. B L Egerton 2646 ff44-45. In a dispute in 1677, Judith stated 'I being the manager in all things and usually he did was by comand, as from my husband...' from the copy of 'My exceptions against John Kendall's Bill', 1677, ERO, D/DBa L35.

<sup>39</sup> Joan Thynne to her husband in A Wall, 1982, p13 and p25. Bridget Phelips' letter to Thomas Smyth, BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court Papers, AC/C 56/1. Mary Coke to her husband, HMC, App. Part I, 1888, p130, 1623.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Joan Thynne to her husband, in A Wall, 1982, pp14 and 30.

<sup>41</sup> HMC, 1888, p124. Anne Wen Brynkir reported difficulties to her brother over getting his corn threshed in Caernarvon in 1619, NLW, Clenennau Papers, No. 386.

mowers. The 'wild rascals canot be goten out of the ale hous bee the wether never so faire. For this fine day I could not get a swarth cot by them so that at this rat wee are like to mak a tedious buisnes of harvist.' Managing workmen was obviously causing her problems, although she was quite prepared to tackle the job. Like Mary Coke, Florence suggested that being female made that particular task more difficult.<sup>42</sup>

If not enough produce was grown on a farm, then extra had to be bought in for the winter. Women showed that they understood price movements and variability of quality. Joan Thynne reported to her husband that the harvest at Caus had yielded 12 loads less than the previous year and she thought he would have to buy more. She expected the price to rise by the end of the year.<sup>43</sup> Although Joan Thynne revealed in her letters that she was knowledgeable and competent, she referred most decisions back to her husband, and was careful how she phrased her opinions, apologising when she displeased her husband, John. In 1600 there was a problem over the book-keeper who had committed some misdemeanour for which John had not forgiven him. Joan tried to soothe her ruffled husband, and point out the advantages of John Whitbroke as a book-keeper, but the decision as to what ultimately happened to him was not hers.<sup>44</sup>

Cattle, beef for eating, cows for milking, oxen for working and horses were bought and sold. Some women showed themselves experienced in stocking the land and the number of the different species it was possible to put on different types of land.<sup>45</sup> Joan Thynne wrote to her husband on March 5 1603

---

<sup>42</sup> Florence Smyth to her husband Tom, BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court, AC/C 60 Nos 21 and 18, 1630s.

<sup>43</sup> Joan Thynne to her husband in A Wall, 1982, p14.

<sup>44</sup> Joan Thynne to her husband in A Wall, 1982, pp14-15.

<sup>45</sup> See for example the letter from the Countess of Bath to her husband, CUL, Hengrave 88 Vol. I, f24 and f54, 1553 and 1555, Mary Coke to her husband, in EMC, 1888, pp130-2, 1623, and Brilliana Harley to her husband, B L Add MS 70,110, 1626.

answering his query about the price of 'beefs'; that it was 'very dear, and dearer they are like to be by report at Easter, and so are sheep.' She was worried that the total revenue from the farm in the previous year might be spent on the purchases he was planning.<sup>46</sup> In 1608, Francis Coke sent the paperwork for three cows and a bull addressed to 'John Coke at Preston and in his absence to my sister his wife.' In the note he explained that 'Two of the kine were from my wife's dairy, the third was bought.' Clearly Francis Coke considered his sister-in-law a partner in the business and the reference to his wife's dairy indicates her involvement.<sup>47</sup>

Women also knew about other farming activities and included them in their letters. At Ashton Court, a warrener was kept to supervise the killing and skinning of rabbits.<sup>48</sup> John Coke wrote to his wife, Mary, in April 1620 and thanked her for the information she had sent him about prices and advised her 'I thinck you shal do wel to send forth your wheate and your cheise for the rates are better with you.'<sup>49</sup> Game was expensive and difficult to come by and highly regarded as a gift. If a buck was promised in correspondence, it was considered a mark of special friendship or a reward for special favours.<sup>50</sup>

The farm had to supply enough malt and hops to brew beer for the household and if not they had to be bought in. The problems of buying in appear in the Thynne letters, Clennau Papers and Hengrave correspondence. Brewing good quality beer

---

<sup>46</sup> Joan Thynne to her husband in A Wall, 1982, p30. See also Brilliana Harley to her husband, Robert, B L Add MS 70,110, April and June 1626; and Anne Countess of Middlesex to her husband Lionel, CKS, U269/1 CP75.

<sup>47</sup> HMC, 1888, p66.

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Smyth to her son Thomas, BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court, AC/C48/17.

<sup>49</sup> John Coke to his wife, B L, Add MS 64,876 f157, 1620.

<sup>50</sup> See for example the letters from Elizabeth Smyth to her son Thomas, BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court Papers, AC/C 48/7 and 15, 1628 and 1629, and Lady Katherine Gorges to Sir Hugh Smyth, AC/C 47/1, 1625, and Thomas Barrington to his father, quoted in ed. G A Lowndes, 1878, p42.

regularly for the household, in order to keep good relations among the servants, who received their keep as part of their wages, was an important part of household management. Between 1598 and 1600, Joan Thynne wrote from Caus Castle in Shropshire to her husband John in the main family house at Longleat, on at least three occasions reporting problems of obtaining supplies for brewing and commenting on the high price of hops and malt.<sup>51</sup>

Where the management was of an estate rather than one farm, there were additional responsibilities for women. The legal problems were often complex: leases and rents were negotiated and papers kept meticulously in case of future disputes. A number of the women involved in estate management arranged tenancies, either by themselves or in association with their husbands. Anne Wen Brynkir let land on behalf of her brother, Sir William Maurice and Mary Coke found tenants for their estate and arranged the letting of ground and houses, although the final decision in some cases rested with her husband.<sup>52</sup> The collection of rents proved problematic in some cases and several women reported having difficulty in collecting them from tenants. In 1616 Lady Sydney Wynn wrote to her husband that 'your rents com in ressonabell well'.<sup>53</sup> Magdalen Bagenall even reported to her cousin that some tenants had taken advantage of her sickness and gone away without paying anything.<sup>54</sup> Ju Barrington, whose letters reveal the most detailed understanding of estate management, was involved in renting land from several owners including University College, Oxford, from the King, and her mother, in both Yorkshire and

---

<sup>51</sup> Joan Thynne to her husband, A Wall, 1982, pp12, 14 and 15. Anne, Countess of Middlesex reported to her husband that she had filled the cellars with 'brave beare and ale', CKS U269/1 CP75, c.1625.

<sup>52</sup> Ann Wen Brynkir to her brother Sir William Maurice, NLW, Clenennau Papers, Nos. 323 and 372, 1616. Mary Coke to her husband, HMC, 1888, p131, 1623, and B L Add MS 64,878 f20, Sep 1623.

<sup>53</sup> Lady Sydney Wynn to her husband John, NLW, Wynn of Gwydir Papers, No. 739, 1616.

<sup>54</sup> Magdalen Bagenall to Sir John Trevor, ESRO, GLYnde 559, unfoliated, dated only Sep. 20.

the Isle of Wight. Where problems arose over leases, some women showed themselves conversant with the legal procedures. Ju Barrington advised John Kendall, the agent, to keep copies of all documents and to prepare his case thoroughly. In 1632, she recommended that their agent Metcalfe should be arrested if he failed to fulfil his promise over collecting the rents. She asked Kendall to persuade her husband to begin a law-suit with John Smyth over the woods.<sup>55</sup>

Some women acted as bankers and were handling large sums of money, which was then loaned out on interest. In many cases the family was the first stop in any attempt to borrow, and women lent money on their own account. Lady Fytton lent her son Edward money in 1634, and Ann Wen Brynkyr tried to help her brother borrow money to meet his expenses but found it difficult.<sup>56</sup> In the mid-1620s Magdalen Bagenall, in Anglesey, dealt in large sums of money relating to estate business. She was experiencing problems obtaining her rents and needed a warrant to obtain possession of £500 which she was owed: Sir Francis Ansley had been dilatory about producing £200 of hers and she mentioned a tithe worth £300 yearly. In her letters Magdalen appeared confident and determined; after telling her cousin, Sir John Trevor that she had been badly used in Ireland, she announced 'I shall make them repent.' She appeared to have control over her own money even though her husband was still alive.<sup>57</sup>

Repairs and building were also significant estate activities. Wood to make repairs was generally grown on the estate, and the necessity of obtaining seasoned wood for building meant that a programme of cutting and planting had to be planned. In

---

<sup>55</sup> Ju Barrington, Memorandum for London, B L Add MS 69,117 ff44r and 45v, 1632.

<sup>56</sup> Information contained in a letter from Jane Fitton to her brother Sir John Trevor, ESRO, GLYnde 558, 1634. Ann Wen Brynkyr to her brother Sir William Maurice, NLW, Clennau papers, Nos. 385, 452 and 453, 169 and undated.

<sup>57</sup> Correspondence of Magdalen Bagenall, ESRO, GLYnde 559, unfoliated.

several letters, concern was expressed about excessive cutting which might create shortages in the future. Florence Smyth wrote to her son Hugh about the importance of replanting after a storm had caused severe damage.<sup>58</sup> Ju Barrington, shortly after her marriage had taken a detailed interest in estate management and in particular trees. In the 1640s, after the death of her husband, a bitter dispute developed between Ju Barrington and her step-son over timber, when he had accused her of denuding the land and depriving him of his future in trees. Ju Barrington was a strong-minded woman and aroused some criticism at the time and since, but the fact that her son-in-law had law-suits running with at least four close relatives suggests that he was litigious and quarrelsome and may not be entirely reliable as a source in this case.<sup>59</sup> Mary Coke, besides taking a personal interest in the building of a new house and reporting on its progress, wrote to her husband explaining that she had had a cow-shed built with a fall in the ground utilised to accommodate the manure.<sup>60</sup>

The ability of the women to manage estates did not meet with universal approval. John Smyth, steward on the Berkeley estate in Gloucestershire, was highly critical of both Anne and Katherine Berkeley. In his account of the life of Henry Berkeley he wrote...

in reading over the life of this Lord, his posterity cannot but observe his sufferings and losses by too indulgently following the wills and Counsells of his mother and his first wife...female counsells are to

---

<sup>58</sup> Florence Smyth/Pigott, to her son Hugh, BRO, Smyth of Ashton Court AC/C72/2. See also Elizabeth Smyth/Gorges to her son Thomas where she forbade the cutting of any more wood for sale, BRO, AC/C 48/28, 1641, and Brilliana Harley to her husband, reporting the new paling that was being put around the park and news of wood sales, B L Add MS 70,110, Feb 1626.

<sup>59</sup> See G A Lowndes, 1878 and 1884, pp42-5, For Ju Barrington's interest in estate matters see the notebook transcribed from Barrington manuscripts, ERO, D/DBa 2 11.

<sup>60</sup> Mary Coke to her husband John, B L Add MS 64,878 f104, 1623. She also reported in detail to her husband on the progress of the building of their new house Hall Court, Add MS 69,869 ff15, 17, 19, and 21, c.1605-1610.

bee suspected, as proceeding from an improper sphere.

Smyth found it difficult to relate to powerful women. In his book he expressed a clear view of the position of women and he quoted the advice of Sir Walter Raleigh that women were born 'to obey not rule their affaires.'<sup>61</sup> According to Smyth, Anne, Lady Berkeley was so anxious to preserve her interests in the 1540s that she became involved in many law-suits. Katherine, Lady Berkeley, who married Henry Lord Berkeley in 1554 aged 16, was extravagant, spending large sums of money on country pursuits: as the daughter of the Duke of Norfolk she had been used to a large household. She took a direct interest in the financial administration of the estate and at one time she had a percentage of any rent increase handed over to her by the servants, unknown to her husband. Later she became receiver-general of all moneys, but the estate became more unprofitable. Finally she negotiated an annual allowance of £300 for herself which lasted until her death in 1596. In Smyth's opinion the two women caused serious financial problems for their heirs and they did not bring up their sons with sufficient training to be effective managers themselves. They had failed not only in the area in which Smyth thought they ought not to be interfering (estate management), but they had also failed in the traditional role of mother. Elizabeth and Thomas Berkeley continued the financial problems of the family. They got heavily into debt in the first 14 years of their marriage, although Elizabeth did try to ameliorate the situation by writing down what they spent, and a retrenchment agreement was reached in 1609, to limit the household and expenses.<sup>62</sup> Smyth was openly critical of the women involved in the management of the Berkeley estates.

#### Women as educational benefactors and founders

---

<sup>61</sup> John Smyth, *The Lives of the Berkeleys*, 3 Vols., ed. Sir J Maclean, Gloucester and Bristol Archeological Society, 1883-85, Vol. II, pp387 and 413.

<sup>62</sup> John Smyth, 1883-5, Vol. II pp285-7, 386 and 387; Retrenchment agreement, Vol. II p398.

Some research on women as charitable donors has already been carried out, but there has been little attempt to bring together a consideration of the role of women as educational benefactors and founders. This section is selective in its choice of examples, but representative of women as educational donors in the period and will consider the question of how far the gifts and foundations furthered the cause of women's education. An examination of women as founders of convents has been included for three reasons: firstly, because many of these had an educational as well as a religious purpose; secondly, the competence and initiative shown by the founders are indicative of a high level of educational skills; and thirdly, because in this area, women were acting as single women outside the family.

As wives, women had little disposable money of their own with which to make donations, however, Jordan calculated that women constituted nearly 14.5% of all donors in the period 1480-1660. Women gave their money to a variety of good causes such as alms-houses and hospitals and almost 24% of their donations to education. The major donors were almost all childless widows who had inherited money that they could allocate as they liked on the death of their husbands. Few married women made wills and most women with children had relatives to whom they wished to leave money.<sup>63</sup>

Some of the women made substantial donations to existing educational bodies and others, such as Lady Dorothy Wadham and Dame Alice Owen, established entirely new educational institutions themselves. The motivation for making such bequests reveals a multiplicity of intentions. An examination of these helps to define women's interests and to establish how far they were motivated by a concern for education, whether for boys or girls. Several motives were identified for the bequests. Firstly, as in the case of Dorothy Wadham, a

---

<sup>63</sup> W K Jordan, *Philanthropy in England 1480-1660*, Westport Conn., Greenwood, 1969, pp382-3.



widow was primarily carrying out her late husband's wishes, rather than expressing a direct interest of her own. A second motive, was the desire of a family to leave a public statement about its financial success and concern for the community, by establishing an institution that would be of public benefit. A third reason was based on a religious motive; to assure the survival of the Catholic faith was an incentive to educate daughters in safety in schools attached to the convents abroad. Only gradually did Protestant benefactors consider that schools should be established to educate Protestant girls in England, and few were set up in the period under consideration in this study. A fourth motive identified was an educational motive; a donor, such as Alice Owen, who wished to promote educational opportunities for girls for their own sake and to develop intellectual studies for them.

In addition to these motives, the question of opportunity needs to be considered. An examination of patterns of giving by W K Jordan, shows the variety of charitable causes supported by women in the the period under consideration. How did women choose the recipients of their donations? In the sixteenth century, it is common to find in wills, bequests for the poor of the parish, and some money being left to furnish dowries for poor girls. Among women donors in the period 1480-1660, Jordan estimated that nearly 45% of charitable giving was to alleviate poverty, although in some counties it was much higher.<sup>64</sup> For the legator, there was the advantage of flexibility, a donation of any size was possible. As a result, such legacies are found in quite modest wills. A few bequests were made to help provide education locally, either by funding a schoolmaster or by providing a building for him. Among the wills of wealthier testators and in the towns, there was more variety of charitable donations. In towns there were more charitable institutions for donors to choose from, including hospitals, alms houses and grammar schools. Bequests were also

---

<sup>64</sup> Jordan, 1969, Table IX, Appendix pp382-3.

made to cathedrals and churches for building or enhancement, including monuments. For the wealthy, the choices they made would ensure public recognition of family generosity. If education was chosen it was an indication of commitment rather than a random selection.

In the smaller bequests for educational purposes, women gave money for scholarships for poor students at school and at the universities. For example, in 1613, Agatha Borrowdale of Bury left money for the education of John Foulkes, until 'he shall be preferred to the universitie as a scoller, or be bound owte an apprentice to some good trade of life.'<sup>65</sup> Calculating the educational donations of Norfolk women, Jordan found that they gave £4,690.7s for university purposes, £2,272.6s to grammar schools and £696.6s for the endowment of scholarships. The average gift in Norfolk was £47.17s.4d. Two important points can be drawn from these figures. First, virtually all the money went to endow boys' education and second these donors were drawn from the wealthy sectors of society; the average donation was a substantial sum of money.<sup>66</sup> The women by their gifts were perpetuating the existing arrangements, whereby the education of boys of the gentry largely took place in institutions, whereas most girls continued to be educated at home, although some girls' schools were founded after the 1620s. Little money was given to elementary education and the example of sisters Ellen Hopkinson and Jane Crowther in Halifax was a rare one. They established an elementary school in 1610 and left an endowment of £160 to support a schoolmaster 'who shall teach the children of the poorest people...to know their duties towards God and enable them the better unto several services in the church or commonwealth.'<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> ed. Samuel Tyms, *Wills and Inventories from the Registers of the Commissary of Bury St Edmunds and the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, Camden Society, 1850, pp157-162.

<sup>66</sup> W K Jordan, *Charities of Rural England 1480-1660*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1961, p97.

<sup>67</sup> W K Jordan, *op. cit.*, p340.

Some women did not wait until they died to provide very practical assistance for the education of poor children in the neighbourhood. Oliver Heywood's mother, the wife of a Lancashire fustian weaver, became a devout Puritan in adult life and an assiduous reader of the scriptures. In his autobiography her son wrote...

It was her usual practice to help many poore children to learning by buying them bookes, setting them to schoole, and paying their master for teaching, whereby many a poore parent blessed god for help by their children's reading.<sup>68</sup>

At the other end of the scale, major donations were made by women like Joyce Frankland, the wealthy widow of a merchant venturer and a cloth-worker. Joyce Frankland suffered personal tragedy when her only son was killed as a result of a riding accident. The story of how she became a benefactor is explained by a visit that Alexander Nowell, Dean of St Paul's made to her. He found her in great distress and persuaded her that by endowing places for poor scholars, she would be providing for them. He argued that 'they would be in love towards you as dear children, and will most heartily pray to God for you during your life; and they and their successors after them, being still Mrs Franklands scholar, will honour your memory for ever and ever.' She gave £1,540 outright and annual rents in perpetuity of £33.6s.8d to Caius College together with 'a very great sum' to Brasenose Oxford and gifts to several other colleges.<sup>69</sup> In her will of 1587, she gave £470 to found a grammar school in Newport because she was told it needed one.<sup>70</sup> There is no evidence of Mrs Frankland becoming personally involved in the spending of her money or in policy

---

<sup>68</sup> M Spufford, *First steps in Literacy*, *Social History* 4 (3), 1979, p435; and M Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, 1985 ed., p35.

<sup>69</sup> Christopher Brooke, *A History of Gonville and Caius College*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1985, pp95-6.

<sup>70</sup> W K Jordan, *The Charities of London 1480-1660*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1960, p229.

decisions relating to it. She is an example of a benefactor on a grand scale choosing education as the destination of her gift, for complex reasons linked with the death of her only child, rather than for educational reasons. Other widows making substantial donations to education, include Elizabeth Powlett, widow of the founder of Trinity College Oxford, who gave properties to the College and was a philanthropist in her own right.<sup>71</sup>

There were several women who should be described as founders of educational establishments as well as benefactors. Dame Alice Owen obtained a Royal Patent in 1610 to erect 'one chapel and house for the dwelling of one good man, being a Minister of the Word of God, who may be able to read to the aforesaid widows... and teach the sons and daughters of the poor.' Her school opened in 1613 (the year of Alice Owen's death) with 30 children who were taught free.<sup>72</sup> Alice Owen was personally responsible for setting up the school named after her and it is interesting to note that in the statutes she was quite explicit about teaching girls as well as boys. Anne Sackville, Lady Dacre, planned with her husband the foundation of a hospital to accomodate at least 20 poor people, men and women, and she carried forward the project herself after his death in 1594. In the Statutes it was stated that each of the inhabitants of the hospital 'shall have the libertie to keep and bring up one poor Childe within the said Hospitall, so as the said Child bee brought up in some good and laudable art, or science, wherby hee or shee may better in tyme to come lyve by their honest labour.'<sup>73</sup> In her own will of 1594 she left £110 in money and £40 a year in lands in perpetuity to the hospital. It is arguable that Lady Dacre had in mind training rather than education for the children, but the Hospital

---

<sup>71</sup> W K Jordan, 1960, p257.

<sup>72</sup> R A Dare, *A History of Owen's School 1613-1976*, The Brewers Company, rev. ed. 1980, p19.

<sup>73</sup> C W Scott Giles, B V Slater and C S Hill, *The History of Emanuel School 1594-1976*, London, Emanuel School, 1977, p28.

developed eventually into Emanuel School providing education for boys. Like Joyce Frankland, Lady Dacre had lost her only son and having a social conscience wanted to provide means of self-improvement for the poor.

Dorothy Wadham was personally involved in every stage of the organisation, construction and staffing of the College at Oxford, that she and her husband had planned together before his death. The statutes of 1612 stated her personal commitment to the project firmly. 'I Dorothy Wadham, relict of the said Nicholas desiring to fulfill his wishes as far as I can, and to promote this pious work so much as I am able...do erect found and establish a perpetual College of Students.'<sup>74</sup> By 1613 the College was built and she continued to maintain her influence over it. She reserved the right to make nominations to appointments; a right which she enforced on numerous occasions for both academic and domestic staff. Her last letter, on the subject of a fellowship, was written in April 1618 just before she died. Dorothy Wadham's letters give the impression of a determined woman, desirous of ensuring that her decisions were followed, in spite of the fact that she was mostly dealing with men who had been well educated in formal institutions. Her behaviour did not conform to the conventional norms favoured by most parents: she was not deferent and appeared to have no difficulty issuing orders and challenging those who did not obey her. She came from a learned background herself; her father was Sir William Petre of Ingatestone in Essex, but little is known about her own education. The letters contain no evidence of Dorothy Wadham's involvement in educational policy matters.

Some women gave donations to existing institutions with a view to changing the educational purpose of that institution. For example, Dame Mary Ramsay gave money to Christ's Hospital for teaching practical skills which would prepare pupils for the

---

<sup>74</sup> T G Jackson, *Wadham College*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1893, pp11, 53 and 66-7.

world of work. Her views on education at Christ's Hospital were gendered. She wanted boys to be taught commercial writing and book-keeping. Girls were to be trained in practical, housewifely skills and put out to service. It was not until the seventeenth century that girls were taught to read: in 1624 George Dunn gave money for that purpose. Mary Ramsay was a substantial benefactor to education; in her will, she left money for a trust fund to keep four scholars and two fellows from Christ's Hospital at Peterhouse, Cambridge, for a free writing and ciphering school for teaching orphans to write and to cast accounts within the precincts of the hospital, as well as for the foundation of a grammar school at Clavering. During her lifetime she had already founded a free grammar school at Halstead and maintained a schoolmaster there.<sup>75</sup> Her donations and bequests were largely made for the benefit of boys' education. Mary Ramsay's lifetime gifts to Christ's Hospital would ensure that the girls were better trained for employment or marriage, but did not give them the educational opportunities that boys were given.

New foundations of girls' schools, such as Red Maids in Bristol were made mainly from the 1630s onwards which expanded the educational opportunities for them; some of these were listed by Kenneth Charlton.<sup>76</sup> However, the overwhelming impression left by women donors is that their gifts very largely benefited boys' education either at school or university. Alice Owen was one of a small number of women to specify the teaching of girls in a higher level school. The existing situation for girls of the gentry classes was maintained and most of their education continued to be received at home.

#### The foundation of convents by English women

---

<sup>75</sup> L B Wright, *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, London, Methuen, 1965, p61. London, Guildhall Library, Christ's Hospital MSS, 13,543, 13,583, 1595.

<sup>76</sup> Kenneth Charlton, 1981, p7.

The numbers involved and the complexity of the operations mean that the foundation of convents by Englishwomen must be considered a movement of some significance. When Lady Mary Percy founded the Benedictine House in Brussels in 1598, it was the first of a series of English Convents. As with all the other convents, money had to be found not only for purchasing the building but also for the upkeep afterwards and the maintenance of supplies, and permission had to be obtained from both local secular and ecclesiastical authorities. If the house was to flourish, it had to attract women with sufficient dowries or other endowments. One of the problems for the Mary Ward sisters at St Omer, was that their rules meant that they had no permanent revenue and this caused serious financial problems from the start. Most of the choir nuns listed in the early convent records came from landed backgrounds: their parents were able to make the necessary contributions or give dowries to the convents. When new houses were established they were expected by the authorities not to be a burden on the local community. Lady Mary Percy and Joanna Berkeley, the organisers of the Brussels Benedictine convent, arranged to buy a house from Sir Rowland Longinus, Viscount of Winnoxe Bergues for 10,500 florins and they started life with eight choir nuns and four lay sisters. The Archduke Albert is said to have given them £2000 towards the cost of the foundation. Then they had to raise money for building works: a pension from the King of Spain and money from some English soldiers stationed in the area were said to have contributed substantially towards this. As a result, the Benedictines built a church and a regular monastery and by 1612, constitutions were drawn up in consultation with many learned people. Music was important to the Benedictine nuns and an organ was installed and Richard Dering hired as organist. Images, candlesticks and other beautiful objects were provided by the nuns and their families. It was an impressive community and attracted 'many persons of quality and other

good abilities."<sup>77</sup> By 1624 the convent consisted of about 70 nuns and was among the largest of the English houses on the continent.

Between 1598 and 1632, some 11 foundations were established in the Low Countries and Northern France; each new house was self-sufficient, responsible for its own finances and maintenance. Some of these, such as the Mary Ward sisters in St Omer in 1609, were established in the face of local opposition and required considerable determination, others faced serious problems and disasters from plague and warfare.<sup>78</sup> Each house had to train its own nuns and several had schools attached either for girls who wished to become nuns or for girls whose parents wanted them to have a Catholic education.

Two schools for which the curriculum exists were established by English nuns in the early part of the seventeenth century in France. The school for girls established by Mary Ward (1585-1645) is well-known and has been discussed at length, for example by Mary Oliver and Marie Rowlands.<sup>79</sup> Mary Ward's ideas for a new order proved controversial and ultimately led to its breakup. Her aim to live uncloistered shocked many, both cloistered and secular who considered it was immodest. Her plans for girls' education were far-sighted; intellectually stimulating and with a concern for individual development. Mary Ward insisted on using only trained teachers in her schools and devised a curriculum which contained a religious education and advanced studies including languages and the

---

<sup>77</sup> For the history of the founding of the convent see P K Guilday, 1914, pp256-60; *Chronicle of the First Monastery founded at Brussels, 1597*, St Mary's Abbey, Bergholt, 1898; Abbess Neville's *Annals of English Benedictine Nuns*, Catholic Record Society, Misc. VI, 1909, pp2-11, *Dodd's Church History of England*, ed. Tierney, London, Charles Dolman, 1841, Vol.4, pp102-3. Abbess Neville's *Annals*, CRS, 1909, p8.

<sup>78</sup> For an account of the founding of the religious houses see P K Guilday, 1914. Further details are contained in ed. Tierney, 1872, and in the convent records published by the Catholic Record Society.

<sup>79</sup> Mary Oliver, *Mary Ward 1585-1645*, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1959; Marie Rowlands, 1986, pp168-172.



classics.<sup>80</sup>

An Augustinian sister, Letice Tredway 1593-1677, also founded a school for English girls. She had been a canoness at Beaulieu for 20 years when she decided to establish a new house in Paris in 1632. She started with only two professed nuns and negotiated with the authorities herself. After a financially precarious start, Lettice Tredway had by 1636 paid off the debts incurred, bought a house for £2000 on which she raised a loan and in 1638 bought the property which became the home of the Convent for the next 200 years. Large amounts of building work took place and by 1639 the new school, The Fosse, was taking pupils, both day and boarding.<sup>81</sup> Although it struggled in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the school survived under the Augustinians. The rules of the school required the pupils to speak French at all times. They learned reading, writing, 'casting account' and practical domestic skills including tapestry and plain work and making sweetmeats and pastry work 'if required by relations.' The day was interspersed with religious studies and services, including learning the Douay catechism by heart. Dinner was taken in silence or listening to a chapter of Thomas à Kempis read in a low voice. Girls could also learn music and dancing but they were forbidden to attend their lessons unless in the company of a 'grave religious.' They had to behave themselves with respect, sobriety and decency, avoiding all loud talking and noisiness. There was one day off a week, generally Thursday. The manuscript does not explain the purpose of the curriculum in the way that Mary Ward did, but it shows that the pupils at the school would have a grounding in the skills they needed to become successful wives of the gentry and aristocracy secure in their faith, or with further training in

---

<sup>80</sup> Mary Oliver, 1959, Appendix II, pp225-9.

<sup>81</sup> Antony F Allison, 'The English Augustinian Convent of our Lady of Syon at Paris: its foundation and struggle for survival during the first 80 years 1634-1713', *Recusant History*, Vol. 21 No. 4, Oct. 1993, pp458-9.

Latin could become choir nuns themselves.<sup>82</sup>

### Conclusions

Through a detailed study of three significant areas of activity it can be seen that literate women of the landed classes, were either using the opportunities permitted to them by their husbands, or acting independently as single women. The letters show that they had considerably expanded their areas of interest and influence by comparison with the earlier part of the sixteenth century. For example, women of the landed classes including the gentry, acted as intermediaries and participated in the informal arrangements distributing patronage much more frequently than they had at the beginning of the sixteenth century. They understood the means by which influence could be brought to bear on decisions being made in the courts or by bureaucracy, and favours obtained. By writing their own letters and acting on their own account, women were operating in the public sphere outside the household, often on matters very similar to men. They advanced the interests of their immediate families by maintaining contacts likely to be beneficial. Within the limits permitted to them, many women were active in a variety of ways seeking to advance the interests of family or client.

Literacy also enabled some women to participate in estate and farm management. Literate women were able to check information coming into the estate for themselves, monitor progress on projects and report on them to their husbands. Whereas in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it was a few exceptional women who managed estates, by the end of the sixteenth century, women involved in management are to be found much more widely. The level of responsibility of women managers was determined by their husbands' attitudes, and a variety of experience can be seen among the families considered in this

---

<sup>82</sup> Dodd, 1841, Vol. 3, pp17-18; WDA, XXXVII, p317.

study. Even experienced negotiators like Ju Barrington, knowledgeable about financial deals and leases, was careful how she presented her ideas to her husband. Other husbands left more decision-making to their wives. For most of the women involved, estate management meant operating as a junior partner, working with the approval of their husbands. The absence of comment on estate matters in a number of the families studied suggests that the participation of women was dependent on the relationship between husband and wife.

The analysis of charitable donations from women shows that widows with property to leave were substantial donors to education, but their motives for giving varied. Most of them gave money to boys' education either at grammar school or university level. Protestant women donors, apart from Alice Owen, did little to further the development of higher level schooling for girls, although some practical help was given at a local level to girls at petty schools by some of the smaller donors. Girls' education in the 1620s in England, remained centred within the family for the gentry.

Catholic women and nuns were active founders of new institutions in Flanders and in Northern France, both as benefactors and organisers from the end of the sixteenth century. Some of them organised large sums of money and entered complex negotiations in order to establish and secure the long term future of their convents. The new convents significantly increased the opportunities for Catholic women of the gentry classes to obtain an education and to fulfil their religious vocation. Convent records show that there was a constant movement of women and girls between England and the religious houses in spite of the efforts of successive monarchs to prevent it. These establishments provided access to schooling and an alternative to marriage for Catholic girls that was not available to Protestant girls at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

By examining these three areas of women's activities it is possible to see the way in which women used their skills in literacy and how this influenced both their roles within the family and their ability to act independently. The survey has also shown the variety of lived experience for women and the importance of developing case studies for the family structures even among the gentry class.

### CONCLUSION

This study of personal documents in collections of gentry papers has enabled a number of significant conclusions regarding girls' education and its influence on the role of women in the landed classes from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to be drawn.

There are important elements of both continuity and change in attitudes and practice of parents bringing up daughters over the period. Over the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries parents, both Catholic and Protestant, continued in their letters, wills and personal documents, to emphasise the essential qualities they expected of their daughters; they should be obedient, chaste and pious throughout their lives. Where there is evidence of the teaching girls received, it can be shown that the curriculum was carefully chosen to foster desired character traits, while at the same time teaching girls skills in reading and writing. Character formation was to many parents the most important element in the upbringing of daughters. No evidence was found in the collections studied of parents who said they wanted to develop the intellectual capabilities of their daughters.

Parents' attitudes to girls' education changed over the sixteenth century in that the teaching of basic literacy skills became part of the training that most girls of the gentry, both Protestant and Catholic, received in order to make them more desirable marriage candidates. This resulted in larger numbers of girls being taught to read and write; evidence in the collections studied suggests that the majority of girls of the landed classes were literate by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Little discussion took place in family correspondence about girls' education, and there are few indications that formal arrangements were made for the teaching of girls, yet the evidence shows that in the families

studied, many women were writing or signing their own letters. Parental attitudes favouring the teaching of girls were not confined to the gentry classes; evidence, particularly from wills, shows that some parents from quite poor backgrounds desired that their daughters should be taught to read if not to write. There is, at the same time, evidence of a few parents from the gentry not considering that literacy was an essential part of the upbringing of their daughters.

The changing attitudes of parents regarding their daughters' education was the result of the influence of a number of factors. An interest in girls' education was fostered by the advice being given in many of the prescriptive conduct books. Religious reformers, from the humanists at the beginning of the sixteenth century to the Puritans and the leaders of the new English convents being established on the continent at the end, promoted the concept of the importance of female literacy. Through the ability to read appropriate religious texts, a woman would become a good christian and a better wife and mother. The explosion in the volume of printed works in the latter part of the sixteenth century provided both an additional incentive and the texts for girls to read. At the same time, as women became more involved in organising the upbringing of children and grandchildren, the transmission of cultural values, the management of family estates or farms, the maintenance of family network links and intervention in informal patronage networks, the value of their contribution was increasingly recognised by male family members. The practical contribution that could be made by women in these different spheres of activity was largely unrecognised by the writers of the advice books, who envisaged a much more restricted role for them in the family, under the control of their husbands. Here practice departed from theory, with parents and husbands forming their own expectations about the role they expected their female relations to play in family life. While there were variations in practice, the parameters were quite closely defined; only as single women or under

extreme conditions were women able to breach the limits without incurring general opprobrium. The emphasis on conformity in all correspondence relating to girls, showed how closely parents were responding to the influence of their social milieu and the expectations of their peers.

Catholic parents behaved in a similar way to Protestant parents regarding their daughters' education. Parents belonging to a persecuted religious group, whether Catholic or Puritan, had an additional motive for educating their daughters: to preserve their faith which was under threat. Catholics also had an alternative future for their daughters who might become nuns rather than marry; literacy was an essential qualification to becoming a choir nun in one of the prestigious convents. The process of educating some Catholic girls of the gentry was distinctive, in that by the first decade of the seventeenth century ~~some~~ were sent abroad to schools attached to the newly opened English houses, although many were still educated at home within the family.

The term 'education' as applied to girls in the period was gendered and needs to be separately defined. Parental emphasis on character formation as the essential central element of their daughters' education was not replicated in their attitudes to their sons' education. The restricted nature of the education considered appropriate for girls can be seen in the evidence from the school books of Rachael Fane. Although introduced to foreign languages including Latin, and being taught secretary hand as well as the more usual cursive script, she was inculcated with values regarding appropriate behaviour for a girl. The absence of evidence regarding the educational process for most girls makes it impossible to compare schooling for girls and boys in the sixteenth century. It was only at the beginning of the seventeenth century that girls' schools began to be established to serve more than a handful of pupils. Before that time most educated girls of the gentry were taught at home either by tutors or governesses or,

most likely by their mothers.

By educating their daughters to be good wives and mothers, parents were not seeking to alter the structure of family life, which remained patriarchal throughout the period. Their aim was to make their daughters more attractive marriage partners, able to fulfil the expectations of both their husbands and their families, to become companions and friends able to share more directly in the responsibilities of family life under the authority of their husbands. Evidence from the correspondence of both husbands and wives confirms the changing nature of the relationship between spouses over the latter part of the sixteenth century. It was the attitude of the husbands which determined the extent of the involvement of women in estate and farm management and other family responsibilities. Most women in their correspondence to their husbands and other members of the family accepted the patriarchal marriage structure. Their letters show that they were aware of the limits of their freedom to act and the occasions on which they would have to seek the approval of their husband for a particular course of action.

The support of wives for their husbands was not open-ended: there were limits to their tolerance of their husbands' behaviour. Where the men were violent, cruel, or threatening in some other way, some women were prepared to seek help to secure their own position; most of them in their letters recognised the difficulty of their situation trying to prove their case in a dominant male culture. The ability to write their own letters gave them the possibility of independent access to a support network or assistance in obtaining redress for their grievances. There was only one other situation when a wife might be forgiven for challenging her husband's authority, and this would only be supported within her own religious sect. Women were excused from following their husbands' religious practice if it endangered their immortal souls. There were families in which husband and wife were



members of different churches and a wife made independent arrangements regarding religious observance.

The levels of education achieved by women can be broadly defined, particularly for women whose correspondence remains. Five categories were identified. More than half the named women in the study fell into the second level which meant they could read and write and were able to manage family affairs. Twenty six per cent, from the evidence seen, were able to sign their letters and would be able to read print and fell into level three. About fourteen per cent were educated to the highest level including foreign languages and the ability to write or translate at length. These categories are gender specific and were drawn up based on the evidence from personal and other documents and in some cases printed sources studied in the course of research for this thesis.

The study has shown that by understanding the roles that women were expected to play in family life and by examining their letters, not only for evidence of women's interests but indications of their education, the widespread existence of girls' education and the levels achieved can be demonstrated for the gentry in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is arranged on the following plan:-

- a Primary Sources
  - i) Manuscript Collections.
  - ii) Printed Collections of Manuscripts.
  - iii) Contemporary Printed Books.
- b Secondary Sources
  - i) Books.
  - ii) Articles.
  - iii) Unpublished Theses and Dissertations.

Primary Sources

## Manuscript Collections

- ALTHORP, British Library, (Cumberland and Spencer Papers)  
 Althorp A8; A26; B2.
- ASHBURNHAM, East Sussex Record Office, ASHburnham 839.
- BACON, British Library, Add MSS 41,140; 63081.
- BARRINGTON, British Library, Egerton 2644; 2645; 2646. Essex  
 Record Office, D/DBa A15; F5/1; F20/2; F29; F30-3; F45.
- CAESAR, British Library, Add MSS 12,496; 12,506; 12,507;  
 Lansdowne 158; 161.
- CLIFTON, Nottingham University Library, Clifton MS Cl C 1-716.
- COKE, British Library, Add MSS 64,870-2; 64,874-6; 64,878;  
 64,887-8.
- DERING, Centre for Kentish Studies, Dering MSS U275 Acc 951;  
 U350; U1107.
- DIGBY, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 503. British  
 Library, Add MSS 6178; 30,259; 38,170; 38,175; 41,846; Sloane  
 3827; Harleian 4153; 6758.
- ESSEX, Letters to the Earl of, British Library, Add MS 46,188.
- FANE, Maidstone, Centre for Kentish Studies, Sackville Papers,  
 U269; U269/1.
- GAWDY, British Library, Add MSS 27,395; 27,396; 27,400;  
 36,989; Egerton 2,713-5 (see also Knyvett); 2,722.
- GUILDHALL LIBRARY, Guildhall MSS MS 9065 A Vols. 2 and 3.
- HARLEY, British Library, Add MSS 70,002-4; 70,110; 70,118;  
 70,499 (Vere Correspondence). Nottingham University Library,  
 Portland, London MS, Pl Fm 5.
- HATTON, British Library, Add MSS 29,549; 29,550; 29,571.
- HERRICK, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Bodleian MS Eng. Hist.  
 C474-8; C481.
- INGLEBY, (of Ripley) West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds,  
 Ingleby Records 3,303; 3,323; 3,542; 3,590.
- INGLIS, British Library, Add MSS 4,125; 19,2633; 22,606;  
 27,927. Victoria and Albert Museum L 3087. Bodleian Library,  
 Oxford, MS Bodl 987; 990. Christ(hurch MS 180.
- INGRAM, (of Temple Newsam), West Yorkshire Archive Service,  
 Leeds, TN/C I and II. TN/EA F 10; 15 A.

KNYVETT, British Library, Egerton MS 2,715.  
 KYTSON, Hengrave Papers, Cambridge University Library, Hengrave 82; 85; 86; 88 Vols. I-III.  
 MAURICE, Clennau, National Library of Wales, Letters 1-462. Described hereafter as Clennau.  
 MILDMA, (Sherrington) Northamptonshire Record Office, Westmorland of Apthorpe, W(A) 32-5; 55(A). Central Library, Northampton, Diary of Grace Sherrington. Maidstone, Centre for Kentish Studies, U269 F 38/4.  
 NEWDIGATE, Warwickshire County Record Office, CR 136.  
 NORTH, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Hist. C120.  
 OXINDEN, British Library, Add MSS 27,999; 28,000.  
 PASTON, British Library, Add MSS 27,447; 27,448; 33,597; 36,988.  
 PENRY, British Library, Add MS 48,064(Yelverton).  
 PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, SP Dom 15, Edward VI-James I Addenda, Vols. 17-18, 23 and 26. SP Dom 16, Vols. 67-8, 71, 81-2, 84, 111, 135, 273, 310, 344 and 534. Masters' Exhibits, Duchess of Norfolk Deeds, PRO MS C 115/L2/6697.  
 SMYTH, Bristol Record Office, Ashton Court Papers, AC/C34; C42; C47; C28; C53; C61; 36,074(102).  
 TANFIELD, Archives du Nord, Lille. Life of Elizabeth Tanfield, Lady Falkland. 20 H: 9.  
 THROCKMORTON, Warwickshire Record Office, CR 1,998.  
 TREVOR, (of Glynde Place), East Sussex Record Office, GLYnde 550; 557; 558; 561; 563; 565; 566.  
 TWISDEN, British Library, Add MSS 34,163; 34,169; 34,173; 34,175-7.  
 WADHAM, Wadham College, Oxford, D/DP Q13.  
 WESTMINSTER DIOCESAN ARCHIVES, Records of the Catholic Chapter, AAW./A Vols. V; VI- VIII; IX; XIX; XX; XXVII; XXIX.  
 WILLOUGHBY, British Library, Lansdowne MS 46.  
 WYNN of Gwydir, National Library of Wales, Nos. 28-1,304.

Printed collections of manuscripts: listed by family or area

Bacon, The papers of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey (3 Vols), ed. A Hassell Smith, Gillian Baker and R W Kenney, Norfolk Record Society, Vol. XLVI, 1978/9, Vol. XLIX, 1982/3 and Vol. LIII, 1987/8. The letters and will of Lady Dorothy Bacon 1597-1629, ed. Jane Key, *Norfolk Record Society*, Vol. LVI, 1991, pp77-112.  
 Barrington, Barrington Family Letters 1628-32, ed. Arthur Searle, *Camden Society*, Fourth Series 28, 1983. The History of the Barrington Family, ed. G A Lowndes, *Trans. Essex Archeological Society*, New Series, Vol. 1 pp251-75, Vol. 2 pp3-54, Colchester, 1874 and 1884.  
 Berkeley, Maclean J ed., *The Lives of the Berkeleys by John Smith*, (3 Vols.) Bristol and Gloucester Archeological Society, 1883 & 5.  
 Braunmuller A R ed., *A Seventeenth Century Letter Book*, Delaware, 1983.

- Burleigh W, *Advice to a son*, ed, L B Wright, Cornell University Press, 1962.
- Catholic Record Society Publications:*  
 Abbess Neville's annals of five communities of English Benedictine nuns in Flanders, 1598-1687, Misc. VI, 1909.  
 Records of the Abbey of our Lady of Consolation at Cambrai, 1620-1793, Misc. VIII, 1913. Registers of the English Poor Clares at Gravelines, Misc. IX, 1914. Obituary Notices of the English Benedictine Nuns of Ghent in Flanders, 1627-1811, Misc. XI, 1917.
- Cholmley, *Memoirs of Sir Hugh Cholmley*, Privately printed, 1787.
- Clenennau, *Clenennau Letters and Papers in the Brogyntyn Collection*, calendared and edited by T Jones Pierce, *National Library of Wales*, Supplement Series IV, Part 1, 1947.
- Clifford, *Lives of Lady Anne Clifford and her parents*, summarized by herself, from Harley MS 6177. Intro. J P Gilson, Roxburghe Club 1916. *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, ed. D J H Clifford, Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1992.
- Coke, HMC, Earl Cowper (Coke MSS) 12th Report, Appendix Part 1, 1888.
- Dee, *The Private Diary of Sir John Dee*, *Camden Society*, XIX, 1842.
- Digby, *Private Memoirs*, London, Saunders and Otley, 1827 and 1828. A New Digby Letter-Book: 'In Praise of Venetia', ed. Vittorio Gabrieli, *The National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol IX, Winter 1955 No 2, Vol. IX, Winter 1956, No 4. Vol. X, Summer 1957, No 1. *Loose Fantasies*, ed. V Gabrieli, Rome, 1968.
- Fortescue, *Fortescue Papers*, ed. S R Gardiner, *Camden Society*, New Series 1, 1871.
- Gawdy, *Letters of Philip Gawdy*, ed. I H Jeayes, London, Roxburghe Club, 1906.
- Harley, *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, ed. Thomas Taylor Lewis, *Camden Society*, Vol. LVIII, 1853. HMC, *Portland Papers*, Vol. III, 14th Report, App. II, 1894.
- Hatton, *Correspondence of The Family of Hatton*, ed. Edward Maunde Thompson, *Camden Society*, New Series, Vol. XXII, 1878.
- Hoby, *Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby 1599-1605*, ed. Dorothy Meads, London, Routledge, 1930.
- Holles, *Memorials of the Holles Family 1493-1656*, ed. A C Wood, *Camden Society*, Third Series, Vol. LV, 1937.
- H T ed., *Letters of the Martyrs of the English Church*, London, W Swan Sonnenschein, 1884.
- Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, Lucy Hutchinson, ed. James Sutherland, London, Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Knyvett, *The Knyvett Letters*, ed. Bertram Schofield, *Norfolk Record Society*, Vol. XX, 1949.
- Mildmay, *Sir W Mildmay's Opinion*, Goldsmid Tracts, No. 15, 1884. *A Memorial for a Son from his father*, London, Griffith and Furan, 1893.
- Norfolk, *Norwich census of the Poor 1570*, *Norfolk Record Society*, XL, 1971.
- Northumberland, *Estate Accounts of the Earls of Northumberland*, ed. M E James, *Surtees Society*, 1955.

- Northants., Two Account Books of a London Merchant in the reign of Elizabeth I, ed. G D Ramsay, *Northamptonshire Record Society*, XXI, 1962.
- Notts., Nottinghamshire Household Inventories, ed. P A Kennedy, *Thoroton Society*, Record Series Vol. XXII, 1962.
- Paston, Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston 1603-1627, ed. Ruth Hughey, *Norfolk Record Society*, Vol XIV, 1941.
- Philpot, The examinations and writings of J Philpot, ed. Robert Eden, *Parker Society*, 1842.
- Slingsby, *Diary of Sir H Slingsby*, London, 1836. *Memoirs of Sir H Slingsby*, 1806.
- Smyth, Calendar of the Correspondence of the Smyth Family of Ashton Court 1548-1642, ed. J H Bettey, *Bristol Record Society*, Vol. XXXV, 1982.
- Staffs., Roman Catholicism in Elizabethan and Jacobean Staffordshire. ed. Anthony G Petti, *Staffordshire Record Society*, 4th Series, Vol. 9, 1979.
- Stanley, Stanley Papers, ed. F R Raines, *Chetham Society*, Vols. 29 1853, & 31 1853.
- Wadham, *The Letters of Dorothy Wadham*, ed. R B Gardiner, London, Henry Froude, 1904.
- Wall A D, Two Elizabethan Women, *Wiltshire Record Society*, Vol. 38, 1982.
- Whitelocke, *Liber Famelicus*, ed. John Bruce, *Camden Society*, Vol. LXX, 1858.
- Whythorne, *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne*, ed. J M Osborn, Oxford, 1962.
- Willoughby, *Middleton Manuscripts*, HMC, 1911.
- Wills, North Country Wills, ed. J W Clay, *Surtees Society*, (2 Vols) 1908 & 1912. London Consistory Court Wills 1492-1547, ed. Ida Darlington, *London Record Society*, 1967.
- York, *Tudor Parish Documents of the Diocese of York*, ed. J S Purvis, 1948. *Archives of York Diocesan Registry*, ed. J S Purvis, 1952.

#### Contemporary Printed Books

Dates given are of editions used - not necessarily the first edition.

- Agrippa Henricus Cornelius, *A treatise of the nobilitie and excellency of woman kynde*, trans. David Chapman, 1542.
- Albertus Magnus, *The boke of secrets*, 1549.
- Anger Jane, *Her protection for women*, London, 1589.
- Anon, *A booke of curious and strange inventions*, 1596.
- Ascham Roger, *The Scholemaster, or plaine and perfite way of teachyng children, the Latin tong*, 1570.
- Averell William, *A dyall for dainty Darlings, rockt in the cradle of securitie*, London, 1584.
- Aylett Robert, *Divine and moral speculations*, 1654.
- Aylmer John, *An harborowe for faithfull and trewe subjectes, agaynst the late blowne blaste concerning the government of wemen*, 1559.
- Bacon Nicholas, *The recreation of his age*, 1903.
- Ball J, *A short catechisme*, 1653.

- Batty Bartholomew, *The Christian mans closet wherein is contained a discourse of the training of children*, trans. William Lowth, 1581.
- Becon Thomas, *Catechism*, 1543, pub. 1844, ed. Rev. John Ayre for Parker Society. *Golden booke of christen matrimonye*, 1542. *Christen state of matrimony*, 1546. *A humble peticyon*, 1550. *The worckes of Thomas Becon*, 1564. *The governance of vertue*, 1566.
- Bentley Thomas, *Monument of matrones*, 1582.
- Billingsley Martin, *The pens excellencie or the secretaries delight*, 1617.
- Bradford J, *The complaynt of veritie*, 1559. *All the examinations*, 1561.
- Breton Nicholas, *In praise of virtuous ladies*, 1595. *The mother's blessing*, 1602. *An olde mans lesson and a young mans love*, 1605. *The true lovers knot untied*, 1670.
- Bruto Giovanni Michele, *The necessarie fit and convenient education of a yong gentlewoman*, 1598. trans. WP.
- Bullinger Heinrich, *The christen state of matrimonye, set forth by Miles Coverdale*, 1541.
- Chambers Sabine, *The garden of our lady*, 1615.
- Clinton E, *The Countesse of Lincoln's Nursurie*, 1622.
- Coote Edward, *English Schoolemaster, teaching all his scholers the order of distinct reading*, 1596.
- de Beau Chesne J, *A booke containing divers sortes of hands*, 1570.
- Dering Edward, *A briefe and necessary instruction, verye needefull to be knowen of all householders*, 1572. *Godlye private prayers for householders in their families*, 1574. *A short catechisme for householders*, 1580. *A most godlie and comfortable letter*, 1583. *Certaine godly and verie comfortable letters*, 1590. *Letters*, 1597.
- Elyot Thomas, *The education or bringing up of children*, c.1535. *The defence of good women*, 1545.
- Erasmus Desiderius, *A ryght frutefull Epystle devysed by the moste excellent clerke Erasmus in laude and prayse of matrimony*, tranlated into Englyshe by Richard Tavernour 1536. *A shorte Recapitulation or abrigement of Erasmus Enchiridion, brefely comprehendinge the summe and contentes therof. very Profitable and necessary to be rede of all trew Christen men.* Drawne out by M Coverdale, 1545. *The praise of folie. Morae Encomium, a booke made in latyne by that great clerke Erasmus Roterodame. Englished by Sir Thomas Chaloner knight*, 1549. *A mery Dialogue declaringe the proper types of shrowde shrewes and wyves*, 1557.
- Florio John, *His Firste Frutes*, 1578. *Second Frutes*, 1591.
- Foxe John, *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes, touching matters of the church*, 1563.
- Fullwood William, *The enimie of Idlenesse*, 1568.
- Gosynhill Edward, *Here begyneth a lytle book named the schole house of women*, 1542.
- Gouge William, *Workes of William Gouge, (2 Vols.)* 1627. *Of domesticall duties eight treatises*, 1622.
- Gray Alexia, *The rule of the most blessed father St Benedict*, facs. ed. Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1976.
- Greene Robert, *Penelope's webb*, 1587. *A disputation betweene*

- a hee conny-catcher, and a shee conny-catcher, whether a Theefe or a Whore is most hurtfull in Cousonage..., 1592.
- Mamillia, 1593. A notable discovery of coosenage, 1591. The Myrroure of modestie, wherein appeareth howe the Lorde delivereth the innocent, 1584. Greenham Richard, *Collected Works*, 1599, containing the Sixth Sermon of the good education of children. A Godlie exhortation and fruitfull admonition to vertuous parents and modest matrones, London, 1584.
- Grymeston Elizabeth, *Miscelanea. Meditations. Memoratives*, 1604.
- Harrington William, *Commendacions of matrymony*, 1528.
- Hart John, *Orthographie*, 1569. A methode or comfortable beginning for all unlearned whereby they may bee taught to reade English in a very short time with pleasure, 1570.
- Joceline Elizabeth, *The mothers legacie to her unborn childe*, 1624.
- Kempe William, *The education of children in learning*, 1588. *The Art of Arithmetic in whole numbers and fractions*, P Ramus trans. W Kempe.
- Knox John, *The copie of a letter, sent to the ladye Mary dowagire, regent of Scotland, in 1556. 1556. The First Blast of the Trumpet against the monstrous regiment of women*, 1558.
- Leigh Dorothy, *The mothers blessing. Or the godly counsaile of a gentle-woman*, 1627.
- Lincoln Countess of, *Nurserie*, 1622 (see Clinton)
- More Edward, *A lytle and bryefe treatyse called the defence of women*, 1560.
- More Gertrude, *Spiritual Exercises*, 1658.
- Morley Thomas, *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall musicke*, 1597.
- Mulcaster Richard, *Positions, wherin those primitive circumstances be examined, necessarie for the training up of children*, 1581. *The first part of the Elementarie which entreateth of the right writing of our English tung*, 1582.
- Newbery Thomas, *A book in Englysh metre, of the great marchaunt man called Dives Pragmaticus*, 1563.
- Nowell Alexander, *A catechisme, or first instruction of christian religion*, 1570 (in Latin and English) 1574 in English.
- Osorius H, *The five Books of the famous... man, H Osorius, contayninge a discourse of a civill, and christian nobilitie*, 1576.
- Partridge John, *The treasurie of commodious conceits & hidden secrets, and may be called, the huswives closet, of healthfull provision*, 1591. *The widowes treasure*, 1599. *The good huswives closet of provision, enlarged ed.* 1600.
- Perkins William, *The foundation of Christian Religion, gathered into sixe principles*, 1591. *An exposition of the Lord's Prayer*, 1592. *Christian Oeconomie*, 1609. *A direction for the government of the Tongue according to God's word*, 1621. *Complete Works*, 1612.
- Platt Sir Hugh, *Delightes for ladies, to adorne their persons, tables, closets and distillatories*, 1599.
- Puttenham George, *The arte of English poesie*, 1589.

- Richardson Elizabeth, *A ladies legacie to her daughters in 3 books*, 1645.
- Roesslin E, *The byrth of mankind, otherwyse named the woman's booke*, trans. T Raynald, 1552.
- Salter Thomas, *A mirrhor mete for all mothers, matrones, and maidens, intituled the mirrhor of modestie*, 1579.
- Seager Francis, *The Schoole of Vertue, and booke of good nourture for chyldren, and youth to learne theyr dutie by*, 1557.
- Smith Henry, *A sermon of the benefite of contentation*, 1590.
- A Preparative to mariage*, 1591.
- Smith Richard, *The life of the most honourable and vertuous lady the La. Magdalen viscountesse Montague written in Latin and now translated into English by C F*, 1627.
- Stow John, *A Survey of London*, 1618.
- Stubbes Philip, *The anatomie of abuses*, 1583. *A christall glasse for christian women*, 1591.
- Turner William, *The first and seconde parts of the herbal lately oversene, corrected and enlarged with the thirde parte lately gathered*, 1568.
- Tyler Margaret, *Mirroure of princely deedes*, 1578.
- Tyrwhit Elizabeth, *Morning and evening prayers, with divers psalmes himnes and meditations*, 1574.
- Udall Nicholas, *Preface to Princess Mary's translation of Erasmus' Paraphrase of the Gospel of St John*, 1548.
- Vives L, *The Defence of Good Women*, trans. Foster Watson ed. E J Howard, Oxford, 1941.
- Whitforde Richard, *A werke for housholders with the golden epistle and alphabete or a crosrowe called an ABC...* 1533.

## Secondary Sources

### Books

- Acheson Eric, *A Gentry Community; Leicestershire in the fifteenth century c.1422-1485*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Allison A F & Rogers D M, *A Catalogue of Catholic Books in English Printed Abroad or Secretly in England 1558-1640*, Bognor Regis, The Arundel Press, 1956. *The Contemporary printed Literature of the English counter-Reformation between 1558 and 1640*, (2 Vols.) Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1988-94.
- Anderson Michael, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914*, London, Macmillan, 1984.
- Arber Edward, *List of 837 London Publishers 1553-1640*, Birmingham, 1890.
- Aries Philippe, *Centuries of Childhood (English Version)* London, Jonathan Cape, 1962.
- Auerbach Erna, *Tudor Artists*, London, Athlone Press, 1954.
- Nicholas Hilliard, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.
- Baines E, *History of Lancashire*, (4Vols) Manchester, John Heywood, 1836. *History of Yorkshire*, (2 Vols.) Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1969.



- Bainton R H, *Women of the Reformation in France and England*, (3 Vols.) Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishers, 1973-7.
- Baldwin T W, *William Shakespeare's small Latine and less Greek*, Urbana, 1941.
- Ballard George M, *Memoirs of Several Ladies*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1985.
- Baumann Gerd ed. *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985.
- Bennett H Stanley, *English Books and Readers 1558-1603*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1965. *English Books and Readers 1603-1640*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Blackwood B G, *The Lancashire Gentry and the Great Rebellion 1640-1660*, Manchester, Chetham Society, 1978.
- Blomefield Francis, *An essay towards a topographical History of Norfolk*, (5 Vols.) Fersfield, W Whittingham, Lynn, 1739-75.
- Bossy John, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975.
- Bradford C A, *Blanche Parry*, Privately Printed, 1935. *Helena Marchioness of Northampton*, London, G Allen and Unwin, 1936. *Rowland Vaughan*, London, E T Heron, 1937. *Hugh Morgan, Queen Elizabeth's Apothecary*, London, E T Heron, 1939.
- Bridenthall Renate & Koonz Claudia eds., *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, Boston, Houghton-Mifflin, 1977.
- Brooke C L, *The Medieval Idea of Marriage*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Byrne M St Clare, *Elizabethan Life in Town and Country*, London, Methuen and Co., 1967. *The Elizabethan Home*, ed. F P, 1925. *The Lisle Letters*, London, Penguin Books, 1985.
- Camden Carroll, *The Elizabethan Woman: a panorama of English Womanhood 1540-1640*, London, Cleaver-Hume, 1952.
- Cameron Euan, *The European Reformation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Cerasano SP & Wynne-Davies M eds., *Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992.
- Charles L & Duffin L eds., *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England*, London, Croom Helm, 1985.
- Charlton K, *Education in Renaissance England*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.
- Claridge Mary, *Margaret Clitherow*, London, Burns and Oates, 1966.
- Clark Alice, *Working life of women in the seventeenth century*, London, Third Ed. Routledge, 1992.
- Clark Peter, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Politics and Society in Kent 1500-1640*, Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1977. 'The ownership of books in England', in ed. L Stone, *Schooling and Society*, Baltimore, 1976. *Country Towns in pre-industrial England*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1981.
- Clarke Samuel, *A general martyrologie*, London, William Birch, 1677. *Ten Eminent Divines*, London, William Miller, 1662.
- Clark Sandra, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular moralistic pamphlets*, London, Athlone Press, 1983.
- Clayton Ellen, *English Female Artists*, (2 Vols.) London,

- Tinsley Bros., 1876.
- Cliffe J T, *The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families of Early Stuart England*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.
- Coke D, *The Last Elizabethan*, London, John Murray, 1937.
- Collinson Patrick, 'The role of women in the English Reformation illustrated by the life of Anne Locke', *Studies in Church History II*, 1965. *The Birthpangs of Protestant England. Religious and cultural change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, London, Macmillan, 1988.
- Cooke J H A, *Sketch of the History of Berkeley Castle*, Gloucester, John Bellows, 1875.
- Cooper E, *The Life and letters of Lady Arabella Stewart*, (2 Vols.) London, Hurst and Blackett, 1866.
- Coward Barry, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby. The origins, wealth and power of a landowning family*, Manchester, Chetham Society, 1983.
- Crawford P ed., *Exploring Women's Past: essays in social history*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1983. The constructions and experience of maternity in seventeenth century England, in ed. V Fildes (qv) *Women and Religion in England, 1500-1720*, London, Routledge, 1993.
- Cressy David ed., *Education in Tudor and Stuart England*, London, Edward Arnold, 1975. *Literacy and the Social Order*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980. 'Levels in Illiteracy in England 1530-1730', in ed. Harvey J Graff, *Literacy and social development in the West*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp105-125.
- Croke A, *The Genealogical History of the Croke family*, (2 Vols.) London, John Murray, 1823.
- Cross Claire, *The Puritan Earl: the life of Henry Hastings, Third Earl of Huntingdon 1536-1595*, London, Macmillan St Martin's, 1966.
- Cruwys M C S, *A Cruwys Morchard Notebook*, Exeter, James Townsend and Sons, 1939.
- Cust C, *Some account of the Cust family from the time of Edward IV to the present day*, London, C F Roworth, 1923. *Records of the Cust family of Pinchbeck, Stamford and Belton in Lincolnshire*, London, Mitchell and Hughes, 1898.
- Davies K M, 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage', in ed. Outhwaite, *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, London, Europa Publications, 1981.
- Davis Natalie Zemon, *Printing and the People: Early Modern France*, in ed. H J Graff (qv) pp 69-95.
- Dawson Giles E and Laetitia Kennedy-Skipton, *Elizabethan Handwriting 1500-1650*, Chichester, Phillimore, 1981.
- De Mause ed., *History of Childhood*, London, Souvenir Press, 1976.
- Digby G W, *Elizabethan Embroidery*, London, Faber, 1963.
- Dodd C, *The Church History of England*, London, 1742.
- Dowling Maria, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII*, London, Croom Helm, 1986.
- Draper Peter, *The House of Stanley*, Ormskirk, 1864.
- Eales Jacqueline, *Puritans and Roundheads: the Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the outbreak of the English Civil War*,

- Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Eisenstein E L, *The printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Emmison F G, *Elizabethan Life, Home Work and Land*, Vol. III, Chelmsford, Essex County Council, 1976; *Wills of Essex Gentry and Merchants*, Vol. IV, Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, 1978. *Elizabethan Life, Wills of Essex gentry and yeomen preserved in the Essex Record Office*, Vol. V, Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, 1980. *Essex Wills, Archdeaconry of Essex, Archdeaconry of Colchester, Archdeaconry of Middlesex (Essex Division) preserved in the Essex Record Office*, Chelmsford, Vol. 1 1558-65, Washington D C, National Genealogical Society, 1982. *Essex Wills, Archdeaconry of Essex, Archdeaconry of Colchester, Archdeaconry of Middlesex (Essex Division) preserved in Essex Record Office*, Chelmsford, Vol. 2 1565-71, Boston, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1983. *Elizabethan Wills of South West Essex*, Kylin Press, 1983. *Essex Wills, Archdeaconry of Essex, Archdeaconry of Colchester, Archdeaconry of Middlesex (Essex Division) preserved in Essex Record Office*, Chelmsford, Vol. 3, 1571-77, Boston, New England Genealogical Society, 1986. *Essex Wills: the archdeaconry courts*, Vol. 4, 1577-84, Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, 1987. *Essex Wills, the archdeaconry courts*, Vol. 5, 1583-92, Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, 1989. *Essex Wills, the archdeaconry courts*, Vol. 5, 1597-1603, Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, 1990. *Essex Wills, the archdeaconry courts*, Vol. 6, 1591-97, Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, 1991. *Essex Wills, The Bishop of London's Commissary Courts 1569-1578*, Vol. 9, Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, 1994.
- Fanshawe A, *Memoirs of Lady Fanshawe*, London, 1829.
- Ferguson M, Quilligan M & Vickers N J eds., *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Fletcher Anthony, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995.
- Fildes Valerie ed., *Women as Mothers in pre-industrial England*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990.
- Fox Levi, 'The Coventry Gilds and Trading Companies with special reference to the Position of Women', in *Essays in honour of P B Chatwin*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Fraser A, *The Weaker Vessel: Women's lot in seventeenth-century England*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984.
- Fraser F, *The English Gentlewoman*, London, Barrie and Jenkins, 1987.
- Freedman Sylvia, *Poor Penelope: Lady Penelope Rich an Elizabethan Woman*, London, Kensal Press, 1983.
- Freeman R ed., *English Emblem Books*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1948.
- Friedman Alice, *The House and Household in Elizabethan England Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Fullerton Lady Georgiana, *The Life of Elizabeth Lady Falkland*, London, Periodical Publications, 1883.
- Gabrieli V, *Sir Kenelm Digby, un inglese italianato*, Rome,

- 1957.
- Gage John, *The History and Antiquities of Hengrave*, London, James Carpenter, 1822.
- Gardiner Dorothy, *English Girlhood at School: a study of women's education through twelve centuries*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1929. Ed. *Oxinden Letters*, London, Constable, 1933.
- Girouard Mark, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House*, New Haven, Yale, 1983.
- Goody J, *The development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Graff Harvey J, *Literacy and social development in the West: A reader*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Graham Elspeth ed., *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth Century Englishwomen*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1989.
- Guilday P K, *The English Catholic Refugees*, London, Longmans Green, 1914.
- Hamilton Dom Adam, *English Augustinian Canonesses of St Monica's*, Edinburgh, Sands and Co., 1904.
- Hannay M P ed., *Silent but for the Word*, Ohio, Kent State University Press, 1985. Philip's Phoenix: *Mary Sidney Countess of Pembroke*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Ha(r)rington Sir John, *Nugae Antiquae*, (2 Vols.) Bath, W Frederick, 1769.
- Haselkorn Anne M and Travitsky Betty S eds., *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1990.
- Heal Felicity and Holmes Clive, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*, London, Macmillan, 1994.
- Holmes M, *Proud Northern Lady, Lady Anne Clifford 1590-1676*, London, Philimore, 1975.
- Houlbrooke Ralph A, *The English Family*, London, Longman, 1984.
- Houston R A, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education 1500-1800*, London, Longman, 1988.
- Howard C H D, *Sir John Yorke of Niddersdale*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1939.
- Hufton Olwen, *The Prospect before her: A History of Women in Western Europe, Volume One 1500-1800*, London, HarperCollins, 1995.
- Hull Suzanne, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640*, San Marino, Huntington Library, 1982.
- Hurstfield Joel, *The Queen's Wards*, London, Longmans, 1958.
- Huxley G, *Endymion Porter*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1959.
- Ingram Martin, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England 1570-1640*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Jackson T G, *Wadham College*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1893.
- Jayne S R, *Library Catalogues of the English Renaissance*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1956.
- Jones Enid Sophia, *Trevors of Trevalyn*, Privately Printed, 1955.
- Jordan W K, *The Charities of London 1480-1660. The Aspirations and Achievements of the Urban Society*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1960. *The Charities of Rural England*

- 1480-1660. *The aspirations and the Achievements of the Rural Society*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1961. *Philanthropy in England 1480-1660: a study of the changing pattern of English Social Aspirations*, Westport Conn., Greenwood, 1969.
- Kamm Josephine, *Hope Deferred: Girls Education in English History*, London, Methuen, 1965.
- Kanner Barbara ed., *The Women of England from Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present: interpretive bibliographical essays*, London, Mansell Information, 1980.
- Kelly-Gadol Joan, 'Did Women Have a Renaissance?' in *Becoming Visible* eds., Renate Bridental and Claudia Koonz, 1977.
- Kelso Ruth, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1956: 1978.
- Krontiris Tina, *Oppositional Voices*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Labalme P H ed., *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, New York, New York University Press, 1980.
- Laslett Peter, *The World we have lost*, London, Methuen, 1971. *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations: Essays in Historical Sociology*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Lehmberg S E, *Sir W Mildmay and Tudor Government*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1964.
- Lemprière William, *A History of the Girls' School of Christ's Hospital London, Hoddesdon and Hertford*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1924.
- Lewalski Barbara K, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, Cambridge Mass, Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Levin Carole & Watson Jeanie, *Ambiguous Realities: women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1987.
- Leys M D R, *Catholics in England 1559-1829*, London, Longmans, 1961.
- Lodge E, *Illustrations of British History*, London, G Nicol, 3 Vols., 1791. *Julius Caesar*, London, J Hatchardson, 1827.
- MacCurtain Margaret & O'Dowd Mary eds., *Women in Early Modern Ireland*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1991.
- Maclean Ian, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Macfarlane A, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin: a seventeenth century clergyman: an essay in historical anthropology*. London, Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Marriage and Love in England 1300-1840*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986.
- Marshall K N, *The Pastons 1378-1732*, Norwich, Jarrold and sons, 1956.
- Marshall Rosalind, *Virgins and Viragos: A History of Women in Scotland 1080-1980*, Collins, London, 1983.
- McIntosh Marjorie K, *A community transformed: The Manor and Liberty of Havering 1500-1620*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Meale Carol M ed., *Women and Literature in Britain*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Mendelson Sara, *The Mental World of Stuart Women: Three Studies*, Brighton, Harvester, 1987.
- Mildmay, *Genealogical Memoranda relating to the family of*

- Mildmay, Privately Printed, 1872. *A Brief Memoir of the Mildmay Family*, Privately Printed, 1913.
- Millican Percy, *The Gawdys of Norfolk and Suffolk*, Norwich, Goose and Son, 1939.
- Moore A W, *A History of the Isle of Man*, London, Unwin, 1900.
- Moreton C E, *The Townshends and their world: Gentry, Law and Land in Norfolk c.1450-1551*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992.
- Murdock K B, *The Sun at Noon: three biographical sketches*. New York, Macmillan, 1939.
- Newdigate-Newdegate Anne E Lady, *Gossip from a muniment Room*, London, David Nutt, 1897.
- Nichols J G, *Unton Inventories*, Berkshire Archeological Society, 1841.
- Nichols John, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicestershire*. (4 Vols.) London, John Nichols, 1811.
- Norsworthy L L, *The Lady of Bleeding Heart Yard*, London, John Murray, 1935.
- Notestein Wallace, 'The English Woman 1580-1650', in *Studies in Social History. A Tribute to G M Trevelyan* ed. J H Plumb, London, Longmans Green, 1955.
- O'Day Rosemary, *Education and Society 1500-1800: The social foundations of education in early modern Britain*. London, Longman, 1982. *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900*, London, Macmillan, 1994.
- Oglander John, *A Royalist's Notebook*, ed., F Bamford, London, Constable, 1936.
- Oliver Mary, *Mary Ward*, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1959.
- Orme Nicholas, *Education and Society in Medieval and Renaissance England*, Hambledon Press, 1989.
- Outhwaite R B ed., *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, London, Europa Publications, 1981.
- Inflation in Tudor and early Stuart England*, London, Macmillan, 1982.
- Parker Rozsika, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the making of the Feminine*, The Women's Press, London, 1984.
- Pearson Lu Emily, *The Elizabethans at Home*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1957.
- Peters John, *A Family from Flanders*, London, Collins, 1985.
- Petersen Karen & Wilson J J, *Women Artists: recognition and reappraisal from the Early Middle Ages to the twentieth Century*. London, Women's Press, 1978.
- Pettegrew Andrew, *The Foreign Protestant Communities in sixteenth century London*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1987.
- Pinchbeck Ivy & Hewitt Margaret, *Children in English Society* (2 Vols.) London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.
- Plant M, *The English Book Trade: an economic history of the making and sales of books*, London, Allen and Unwin, Second ed. 1965.
- Plimpton G A, *The Education of Shakespeare*, London, Oxford University Press, 1933.
- Pollock Linda, *Forgotten Children. Parent-child Relations from 1500 to 1900*, Cambridge University Press, 1983. *A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children over three centuries*, London, Fourth Estate, 1987. *With Faith and Physic. The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay*

- 1552-1620, London, Collins and Brown, 1993.
- Premi Kusum, *Why not educate girls?*, UNESCO Principal Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 1992.
- Poulton Diana, John Dowland, London, Faber and Faber, 2nd ed., 1982.
- Price D C, *Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Prior Mary ed., *Women in English Society 1500-1800*, London, Methuen, 1985.
- Quaife G R, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives: Peasants and Illicit Sex in early Seventeenth Century England*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1979.
- Ralph P L, *Sir Humphrey Mildmay: Royalist Gentleman*, New Brunswick, Rutgers, 1947.
- Reay Barry ed., *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, London, Routledge, 1988.
- Reid Aileen and Robert Maniura eds., *Edward Alleyn; Elizabethan Actor, Jacobean Gentleman*, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1994.
- Roper Lyndal, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Rotberg R I & Rabb T K eds., *The Family in History: Interdisciplinary Essays*, New York, Harper, 1973.
- Ryan Lawrence V, Roger Ascham, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1963.
- Rowlands D, *An historical and genealogical account of the noble family of Nevill*, London, 1830.
- Sackville West Vita ed., *The diary of Anne Clifford*, London, Heinemann, 1923.
- Shahar Shulamith, *Childhood in the Early Middle Ages*, London, Routledge, 1990.
- Sheils W J and Wood Diana eds., *Women in the church. 'Studies in Church History 27'*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990.
- Simpson R, *The Lady Falkland her life*, London, Catholic Publishing and Bookselling Co., 1861.
- Slater Miriam, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: the Verneys of Claydon House*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.
- Smith E T, *The Life of Lady Arabella Stuart*, (2 Vols.) London, 1889.
- Spufford Margaret, *Contrasting Communities*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974. *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular fiction and its readership in seventeenth-century England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Spurling Hilary, *Elinor Fettiplace's Receipt Book: Elizabethan Country House Cooking*, London, Viking Salamander, 1986.
- Starkey David ed., *The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*. London, Longman, 1987.
- Stenton D M, *The English Woman in History*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1957.
- Sternfeld F W, *Music in Schools of the Reformation*, 1948.
- Stone L, *Schooling and Society*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1976. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, London 1977 Penguin abbr. 1979. *The Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990.

- Strong Roy, *The English Icon: Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraiture*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.
- The Elizabethan Image*, London, Tate Gallery, 1969.
- Artists of the Tudor Court*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1983. *The English Renaissance Miniature*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1984.
- Styrye John, *Life and Acts of John Whitgift*, London, 1718.
- Ecclesiastical Memorials relating chiefly to religion and the reformation of it*, (3 vols.) Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1822.
- Swain M H, *The needlework of Mary Queen of Scots*, New York, van Nostrand-Rheinhold, 1973.
- Thomas Keith, *The meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England*, in ed. Gerd Baumann (qv).
- Townshend Dorothea, *Life and Letters of Mr Endymion Porter*, London, T F Unwin, 1897.
- Travitsky Betty ed., *The Paradise of Women: writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1989.
- Twisden J R, *The Family of Twysden and Twisden*, London, John Murray, 1939.
- Unwin G, *Guilds and Companies of London*, London, G Allen and Unwin, 1938.
- Upton A F, *Sir Arthur Ingram c.1565-1642*, London, Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Ward Jennifer C, *English Noblewomen in the later Middle Ages*, London Longman, 1992.
- Warnicke Retha M, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation*, Westport Conn., Greenwood Press, 1983.
- Whitaker T D, *History and Antiquities of Craven*, London, Nichols and Son, 1812.
- Wiesner Merry E, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Williamson George, *Lady Anne Clifford*, Kendal, Titus Wilson, 1922.
- Winchester Barbara, *Tudor Family Portrait*, London, Cape, 1955.
- Wilson Katharina M ed., *Renaissance and Reformation*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1987.
- Woodbridge Linda, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womanhood 1540-1620*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1984.
- Woodfill W L, *Musicians in English Society from Elizabeth to Charles II*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1953.
- Wright Louis B, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, London, Methuen, 1935 rpt. 1965.
- Wright Pam, *A change in direction: the ramifications of a female household, 1558-1603* in ed. David Starkey, *The English Court*, London, Longman, 1987.
- Wrightson K, *English Society 1580-1680*, London, Hutchinson, 1982.
- Wulstan David, *Tudor Music*, London, Dent, 1985.
- Wunderli Richard M, *London Church Courts and Society on the eve of the Reformation*. Cambridge Mass., Medieval Academy of America, 1981.
- Wyntjes S M, *Women in the Reformation Era*, in eds. Bridenthal



- and Koonz, *Becoming Visible*. (qv)  
 Young Frances B, *Mary Sidney Countess of Pembroke*, London, David Nutt, 1912.  
 Young William, *The History of Dulwich College*, (2 Vols.) London, Bumpus, 1889.

#### Articles

- Allison Antony F, 'The English Augustinian Convent of our Lady of Syon at Paris: its foundation and struggle for survival during the first 80 years 1634-1713', *Recusant History*, Vol. 21 No. 4, Oct. 1993, pp451-96.  
 Anglin Jay P, 'The expansion of Literacy: Opportunities for the study of the Three Rs in the London Diocese of Elizabeth I', *Guildhall Studies in London History*, April 1980.  
 Arnold Janet, 'Lost from Her Majesties Back', *Costume Society*, Extra Series No. 7, Wisbech, 1980.  
 Aveling J C H, 'Catholic Households in Yorkshire, 1580-1603', *Northern History*, Vol. XVI, 1980, pp85-101.  
 Bennett Stanley H, 'Notes on English Retail Book Prices 1480-1560', *Library 5th Series V*, 1950, pp172-8.  
 Bowden Caroline, 'Venetia Digby...a Perfect Wife', in ed. Ann Sumner, *Death Passion and Politics; Van Dyck's Portraits of Venetia Stanley and George Digby*, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1995, pp37-44.  
 Briggs Nancy, 'The Foundation of Wadham College', *Oxoniensa* Vol. XXI, 1956, pp61-81.  
 Charlton K, '"Not publike onely but also private and domesticall": Mothers and familial education in pre-industrial England', *History of Education*, Spring 1988, pp1-20. "'Tak the to thi distaff...": the education of girls and women in early modern England', *Westminster Studies in Education*, Vol. 4, 1981 pp3-18. 'Mothers as educative agents in pre-industrial England', *History of Education*, Vol. 23, No. 2, June 1994, pp129-156.  
 Friedman A T, 'Portrait of a marriage: The Willoughby Letters of 1585-6', *Signs*, Spring 1986, pp542-555.  
 Harris Barbara, 'Women and Politics in Early Tudor England', *The Historical Journal*, 33, 2 (1990), pp259-81.  
 Higgs Laquita, 'Wills and Religious Mentality in Tudor Colchester', *Essex Archeology and History*, 22 (1991), pp87-100.  
 Johnson Susan M, 'Luther's Reformation and (Un)holy Matrimony', *Journal of Family History*, Vol.17, No. 3, pp271-288.  
 Larminie V, 'Marriage and the family : the example of the seventeenth century Newdigates', *Midland History* 9 1984 pp1-22. 'Settlement and sentiment : inheritance and personal relationships among two midland gentry families in the seventeenth century', *Midland History*, 11-12, 1986-7, pp27-47.  
 McMullen Norma, 'The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640', *History of Education*, 1977 (VI), pp87-10.  
 Nevinson J L, 'English Domestic Embroidery Patterns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *Walpole Society*, Vol.

- 28, 1938-40.
- O'Hara Diana, '"Ruled by my friends" : aspects of marriage in the diocese of Canterbury, c.1540-1570', *Continuity and Change* 6(1), 1991, pp9-41.
- Seddon P R, 'Marriage and Inheritance in the Clifton Family in the Seventeenth Century', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, Vol. LXXXIV, 1980, pp33-41.
- Spufford Margaret, 'The Schooling of the Peasantry in Cambridgeshire 1575-1700', *Agricultural History Review*, 18, Supplement, 1970.
- Strauss Gerald, 'The Social Functions of Schools in the Lutheran reformation in Germany', *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2, Summer 1988.
- Watson Foster, 'Vives and the Renaissance Education of Women', *Proceedings Huguenot Society*, 1901-11, Vol. 9, pp331-6.
- Warnicke R, 'Lady Mildmay's Journal: a study in autobiography and meditation in Reformation England.' *Sixteenth Century Journal* 20, (1989) pp55-68.
- Wall A D, 'Elizabethan Precept and Feminine Practice: The Thynne Family of Longleat', *History*, Vol. 75, 1990, pp23-38.
- Weigall Rachel, 'An Elizabethan Gentlewoman-The journal of Lady Mildmay c.1570-1617', *Quarterly Review* 215, 1911, pp119-138.
- Welch D'Arne, 'Sixteenth Century Humanism and the Education of Women', *Paedagogica Historica*, Vol. 24 No.1, 1984, pp241-256.
- Wilson Jean, 'The noble Imp: The Upper-class child in English Renaissance Art and Literature', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 1990, Vol. LXX Part II, pp360-379. 'Icons of Unity', *History Today*, June 1993, pp14-20.

#### Theses and unpublished papers.

- Cahn G, 'Changing Conceptions of Women in sixteenth and seventeenth century England', Unpublished PhD, University of Michigan, 1981.
- Farber E, 'The Letters of Lady E Russell 1540-1609', Unpublished PhD, Columbia University, 1977.
- Harvey Sheridan, 'The Cooke Sisters: a study of Tudor Gentlewomen', Unpublished PhD, University of Indiana, 1981.
- Hood S J R, 'The Impact of Protestantism on the Renaissance Ideal of Women in Tudor England', Unpublished PhD, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1977.
- Hutton Lorna, '"All lives in his controlling". The female reader and the humanist text.' Unpublished paper, given 22 Nov. 1990, University of London.
- Merton Charlotte I, 'The women who served Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth ladies, gentlewomen and maids of the Privy Chamber', Unpublished PhD, Cambridge University, 1992.
- Morrison G R, 'The land, family and domestic following of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, c.1550-1598', Unpublished D Phil., Oxford University, 1990.
- Morgan F H, 'A biography of Lucy Countess of Bedford, the last great literary patroness', Unpublished PhD, University

of South California, 1958.  
Meads Dorothy M, 'An account of the Education of women and girls in England at the time of the Tudors', Unpublished PhD, University of London, 1928.

.

## APPENDIX

## List of literate women c.1550-c.1620

## Key to abbreviations:

Aug.	Augustinians
Ballard	<i>Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain</i>
Ben.	Benedictines
ed.ben.	education benefactor or founder
Franc.	Franciscans
JC	name appears in MS Collection of letters to Julius Caesar: BL Add MSS 12506; 12507
Lodge	<i>Illustrations of British History</i>
Lost	name appears in Lost from Her Majesties back; PRO MS C 115/MS L2/6697
M	name only known through monument with book
M. Ward	Mary Ward Sisters
P	name only known through portrait with book
Poor Cl.	Poor Clares
portrait	portrait with book exists
Reformers	known to have corresponded with religious reformers
sig	signed letter only
surname	location of documents by family connection; see index of ms sources
teacher	appears in MS references as teacher, no other details known
w 1	wrote whole letter in most cases, in a few instances wrote paragraph at end of a letter otherwise written by a scribe.

The numbers in the left hand column refer to the levels of education, a brief definition of which is given below.

Level one

This includes classical education, or the study of at least one modern foreign language; writers of published works, whether these are translations or original prose; original talent in music. Prolific writers whose work remained in manuscript are included in this category.

Level two

Able to read and write in English and possibly cast accounts; able to write own letters either to conduct business affairs or communicate within the family; a musical education, even if the woman is unable to write her own letters, is included in this category.

Level three

Able to sign name and by inference read printed books. Women in this level may have been taught to write, but they did not write the letters seen in the course of this study. Lay sisters in Convents are included as they were expected to have an education.

#### Level four

Women who received some form of schooling; it may have been only for a limited amount of time and it may have been technical training only, for example spinning or needlework; the content and level of attainment unspecified. Women in this category may only be able to sign initials and have little occasion to use writing skills as adults.

#### Level five

Women able to make a mark only: nothing known about schooling. Women in this category will be found when surveys of depositions and other court records are made. In this study few references were found to women of this level, except in the complaints about school teachers and in the small sample of depositions for London.

2	Abbot Bridget	w 1	
3	Abbott Alice		nun poor Cl. lay sister
-	Abergavenny F		see Manners
2	Abington Dorothy	w 1	Digby
2	Acton Judith 1610-		nun Franc.
2	Acton Susan 1600-		nun Franc.
2	Adamson Anne 1580-		nun Franc.
2	Agall Hannah	w 1	Hengrave
2	Alcock Elizabeth		nun Poor Cl. lay sister
2	Alcock Jane 1593-1629		nun Poor Cl. lay sister
2	Alcock Mildred		nun
2	Alcock Philip 1594-1667		
1	Allen Rebecca		
2	Allen Catherine		nun Aug.
2	Allen Helen		nun Aug.
4	Alleyn Joan d.1623		
3	Allott Anne	sig	
2	Altham Mary		nun Aug. Hist. of Scholars
2	Anderton Dorothy 1601-1658		nun
1	Arundel Mary Ctss of		Ballard/class.ed.
2	Arundel Dorothy		nun Ben.
2	Arundel Gertrude		nun Ben.

2/1	Arundel Anne 1558-1630	w 1	Coke
2	Ascham Margaret d.1590 or 2		no mss. seen
-	Ashburnham Anne		see Dering
1	Ashburnham Elizabeth d.1651		see Dering
2	Astley Kate d.1565	w 1	
2	Atkinson Anne d.1611		see epitaph
2	Atstow Cecilia 1586-1640		nun Ben.
1	Audley Eleanor c.1590-1652		no mss seen/book
P	Audley Margaret 1540-1564		portrait
2	Awbrey Jane	w 1	Wynn
3	Awdeley Katherine	sig	Hengrave
2	Babthorpe Grace d.1635	w 1	nun Aug.
1	Babthorpe Barbara		nun M. Ward
-	Bacon Elizabeth		see Knyvett
-	Bacon Anna		see Cooke
3	Bacon Anne née Butts d.1616	sig	Bacon
2	Bacon Frances 1595-1635		nun Ben.
2	Bacon Dorothy c.1570-1629	w 1	Bacon
2	Bacon Lucy		nun Ben.
2	Bagenall Magdalen	w 1	Glynde
3	Bainbrigge Elizabeth	sig	Herrick
2	Baker Ann 1608-1657		nun Franc.
3	Baker Cecily d.1615	sig	
2	Banks Cibille		nun Ben.
3	Bargrave Elizabeth	sig	Dering
P	Barnham Alice		portrait
2	Barrington Judith d.1657	w 1	Barrington
3/2	Barrington Joan 1558-1641	sig	Barrington
2	Barrington Mary	w 1	Barrington
3	Barrington Winifred	sig	Barrington
1	Basset Mary		More, class ed.
3	Basset Joyce	w 1	
2	Bates Susan	w 1	Coke
-	Bath Margaret		see Kytson
3	Bayly Jane	sig	Wynn
E	Baynard Ursula 1587-1623		epitaph
2	Beaumont Aloysia d.1635		nun Ben.
2	Beaumont Elizabeth	w 1	Clifton
-	Bedford Lucy		see Harrington
1	Bedingfield Margaret 1604-1670		nun Poor Cl.
2	Bell Muriel née Knyvett	w 1	Paston
2	Bendloes Mary		nun Aug.
2	Bentley Anne 1589-1656		nun Poor Cl.
1	Bentley Catherine 1591-1659		nun Poor Cl. book
1	Berington Elizabeth 1598-1666		nun Poor Cl. Novice
			Mistress
3	Berkeley Anne d.1564		née Savage
3	Berkeley Elizabeth 1576-1635	sig	
2	Berkeley Jane d.1617	sig	JC. + message
1	Berkeley Joan 1555-1616		nun Ben.Abbess

-	Berkeley Katherine Lady		ed., <sup>1</sup>
2	Bertie Susan Ctss. Kent	sig	JC
1	Best Mary d.1625		nun Aug.
3	Beswick Anne 1580-1641		nun lay-sist. Franc
2	Blanchard Alexia 1582-1652		nun Ben.
2	Blunt Sister		nun Ben.
2	Bodvel Elizabeth	w 1	nun Ben.
3	Bolde Elizabeth		teacher
2	Bond Catharine 1599-1655		nun Ben.
2	Bone Helena 1607-1646		nun Franc.
2	Boult Mary 1606-1659		nun Ben.
3	Bourcher Elizabeth	w 1	Clifton
3	Bourcher Frances	sig	Barrington
2	Bourchier Annie	w 1	Barrington
2	Bourchier Eliz (Ctss Bath)	w 1	JC
2	Bourchier Susan	w 1	Barrington
3/2	Bourne Elizabeth	sig	
3	Bowes Lady		listed Lodge
2	Bowyer Mercy	w 1	Herrick
1	Bradberry Elizabeth		nun Ben. founder
2	Bradshaigh Ann 1611-1666		nun Poor Cl.
2	Bradshaigh Elizabeth 1610-1639		nun Poor Cl.
1	Bradshaigh Clare 1610-1639		nun M. Ward
3	Brandon Frances	sig	listed Lodge
3	Bray Dorothy	sig	listed Lodge
2	Bray Grace 1569-1625		nun Franc.
1	Bream Teresia 1587-1650		nun Ben.
2	Brent Elizabeth 1607-1660		nun Ben.
2	Brent Catherine 1601-1681		nun Ben.
-	Bridgman Maria		ed.benefactor
3	Broke Elizabeth	sig	
2/1	Brome Bridget		books
2/1	Brome Elizabeth		books
2	Brooke Anne		nun Poor Cl.
2	Brooke Placida 1596-1626		nun Ben.
P	Brooker Elizabeth d.1588		portrait
3	Broughton Anne	sig	
3	Brown Juliana		teacher
2	Brown Magdalen 1582-1639		nun Poor Cl.
2	Browne Anne 1602-1665		nun Poor Cl.
2	Browne Frances 1609-31		nun Ben.
P	Browne Thomasine		portrait
3	Browne Rebecca 1603-65		nun Ben. lay sister
3	Browne Mrs		teacher
3	Bruges Winifred d.1586	sig	
3	Brussels Jane	sig	Lost
3	Brydeman Edeth	sig	1st name. Lost
P	Brydges Elizabeth 1575-1617		portrait
2	Brydges Frances c.1580-1663	w 1	Fane

2	Brynkir Anne Wen	w 1	Clenennau
-	Buckhurst Lady Cecily		see Baker, JC
-	Buckingham K Duchess		see Villiers
2	Buckingham Mary 1570-1632	w 1	
2	Bucks Honora	w 1	
2	Bulkeley Anne	sig	Wynn
3	Bulkley Mary	sig	Lost
3	Bulkeley Piera	w 1	Wynn
1	Bulstrode Elizabeth 1575-1631		see <sup>2</sup>
2	Burgh Frances Ly c.1646	w 1	JC
2	Burrows Frances		nun Aug.
2	Bussey Frances	w 1	Wynn
2	Bussy Margaret	w 1	Coke
2	Campion Anne		nun M. Ward
2	Cansfield Anne		nun Ben.
2	Cape Mary 1603-1639		nun Poor Cl.
3	Carey Dorothy	sig	
P	Carey Elizabeth (Hunsdon)		portrait
3	Carey Katherine	sig	JC
2	Carlton Dorothy 1602-1625		nun Poor Cl.
3	Carr Bridget	sig	Lost
2	Carrelton Catherine 1608-1654		nun Poor Cl.
2	Cary Ellen	w 1	Hengrave
2	Cary Lily	w 1	mother JC
1	Cary Elizabeth 1585-1639		writer
2	Cave Eleanor	w 1	Wynn
3	Cavendish Grace	sig	+ greeting
1	Cecil Anne (Ctss Oxford)		no mss seen
3	Cecil Jane	sig	
2	Cellar Jane 1603-1683		nun Ben.
1	Chambers Sabine		nun M. Ward book
3	Chandos Elizabeth	sig	
2	Chandos Frances 1552-1623	w 1	née Clinton
3	Chaworth Bridget	sig	Lost
3	Cheke Mary		could read
2	Chenerie Sara 1606-1640		nun Franc.
2	Cholmley Elizabeth 1600-1655	w 1	Twisden
1	Cirlton Mary 1609-1669		nun Poor Cl. Novice
			Mistress
2	Clark Ann 1595-1664		nun Poor Cl.
3	Clarke Mrs		teacher
2	Clayton Elizabeth		nun Ben.
1	Clement Margaret	sig	Latin
2	Clement Marie 1601-1635		nun Franc.
1	Clement Dorothy		nun Poor Cl.
1	Clifford Anne 1590-1676	w 1	
2	Clifford E		nun Aug.
2	Clifford Elizabeth	w 1	
2	Clifford F	w 1	Clifton



2	Clifford Lucy 1566-1638		nun Franc.
1/2	Clifford Margaret d.1616	sig	JC
2	Clifton Sarah	w 1	Clifton
1	Clinton Elizabeth	sig	book
1	Clitherow Anne		nun Aug.
2	Clitherow Margaret		learnt in prison
P	Clopton Mary		portrait
3	Cobham Frances	sig'	Lost
2	Cockayne Dorothy	w 1	
2/3	Coke Frances (Ctss Purbeck)		could write
-	Coke Eliz		see Hatton
2	Coke Elizabeth	w 1	Coke
1	Coke Mary d.1624	w 1	Coke
2	Coke Susan	w 1	Coke
3	Coke Edil	sig	+ message
3	Coleshull Susan	sig	
2	Colford Martha 1592-1634		nun Ben.
3/2	Colte Joan		see BW
2	Colwal Elizabeth 1593-1635		nun Franc.
3	Colwell Catherine		Hengrave
2	Confaud Constance 1599-1664		nun Poor Cl.
P	Constable Catherine Lady		portrait
-	Conway Brilliana		see Harley
3	Conway Dorothy		could write
2	Conyer Mary	w 1	Clifton
1	Cooke Anne (Lady Bacon) 1518-1608		classical ed.
1	Cooke Elizabeth		portrait
1	Cooke Elizabeth c.1540-1609		classical ed.
2	Cooke Frances	w 1	
1	Cooke Kath.(Killigrew) c.1542-1583		classical ed.
1	Cooke Mildred (Cecil) 1526-1589		classical ed.
3	Cope Anne	sig	Bacon
2	Copley Dorothynun		Ben.
1	Copley Helen		nun Aug.
2	Copley Magdalen		ed. convent
1	Copley Mary		nun Aug.
2	Cornwallis Anne	w 1	Hengrave
2	Cornwallis Eliz d.1628	w 1	Hengrave
2	Cornwallis Jane c.1581-1659		could write
2	Cornwallis Mary		mss not seen
2	Cotton Mary 1593-1641		nun Poor Cl.
2	Crisp Elizabeth 1599-1637		nun Poor Cl. Novice
			Mistress
2	Crisp Margaret		nun Poor Cl.
3	Croft Bridget	sig	Clifton
3	Crompton Ann Lady	sig	
3	Crooke Mary 1580-1650		nun Poor Cl. lay
			sister
P	Crouch Ann 1573-1648		portrait
3	Crumwell Frances Lady	sig	JC
2	Curle Barbara	w 1	
2	Curzon Clare d.1626		nun Ben.

2	Curzon Margaret d.1659		nun Ben.
3	Cutler Elizabeth		teacher
-	Dacre Anne (Ctss Arundel)		see Arundel
3	Dacre Elizabeth	sig	Lodge
-	Dacre Magdalen		see Montague
-	Dacre Mary		see Neville
2	Dacre Anne d.1595 (Fiennes)	sig	+ message JC
2	Dallison Elizabeth 1610-1665	w 1	née Oxinden
2	Danvers Elizabeth		see <sup>3</sup>
2	Darcy Elizabeth (Lumley)	w 1	JC
2	Darcy Elizabeth (Savage)	w 1	Hengrave
2	Darcy Penelope	w 1	portrait
2	Darrell Lucy 1586-1613		nun Poor Cl.
2	Davies Anna	w 1	Harley
1	Davies Eleanor Lady d.1652		Ballard
2	Davy Margaret	w 1	Gawdy
3	Dawes Mrs		teacher
2	de Grey Elizabeth	w 1	Gawdy
2/1	de la Vere Elizabeth		Stanley, Isle Man
2	de Vere Elizabeth (Derby)		admin.Man
3	de Vere Eliz.(Oxford)d.1627	sig	JC
1	Deacon Prudentia d.1645		nun Ben.
4	Deger Annes		teacher/mark
2	Denbigh Susan	w 1	Buckingham
2	Denton Elizabeth	sig	+ message, Dewes
2	Derby Alice	sig	
3/2	Derby Margaret	sig	
2	Dering Anne 1605-1628	w 1	Dering
2	Dering Unton 1601-1676	w 1	Dering
3	Deventer E	sig	
3	Devonshire Ctss of	sig	
2	Dewes Anne d.1643	w 1	Dewes
2	Dewes Cecilia	w 1	Dewes
2	Dewes Elizabeth	w 1	Dewes
3	Dewes Grace	sig	Dewes
3	Dewes Mari	sig	Dewes
3	Digby Abigail		see Heveningham
2	Digby Mary née Mulsho d.1649	w 1	Digby
2	Digby Magdalen 1590-1659		nun Ben.
2	Digby Margaret		nun Ben.
3	Diglett Mary		teacher
2	Dolman Grisill 1605-1646		nun Franc.
2	Dolman Helen 1586-1648		nun Ben.
-	Dorcas Martin		in Bentley
-	Dormer Jane		see Feria
1	Dowriche Anne		French: Histoire
2	Draycott Briget 1604-1654		nun Ben.
1	Draycott Marina 1608-1673		nun Ben. Prioress
2	Drumond Ctss of	w 1	Gage

3	Drury Elizabeth	sig	JC: Lost
3	Drury Elizabeth (Cs Exeter)1579-1654		Smyth conn.
3	Ducke Margaret d.1646		dau.ed.
2	Dudley Katherine 1545-1620		
1	Dudley Mary née Sidney		
2	Dungarvon Lady E	w 1	
3	Dutton Winifred	w 1	Bacon
3	Dyer Annes	'	teacher
2	East Marie 1601-		nun Franc.
2	Eden Mary	w 1	Barrington
2/1	Edgcumbe Anne (Trefusis) fl.1589		poetry
1	Egerton Elizabeth(Cts Bridgewater)		book
3	Egerton Frances	sig	owned library
2	Eliot Mary	w 1	Barrington
2	Essex (Ctss) Frances 1567-1631	w 1	née Walsingham
3	Eure Elin 1598-1626	sig	Clenennau
2	Eure Marie 1605-1635		nun Ben.
2	Evele Grace 1595-1635		nun Poor Cl.
1	Evelinge Elizabeth d.1668		nun Poor Cl. Abbess
2	Evelinge Mary 1604-1657		nun Poor Cl.
2/3	Everard Catherine	w 1	Gawdy
2	Everard Joanna	w 1	Barrington
2	Everleigh Margaret		nun Franc.
2	Eyre Lady Dorothy		
2	Fairfax Elizabeth	w 1	Gawdy
2	Fane Elizabeth Lady		pub. psalms
2	Fane Mary	w 1	Fane
1	Fane Rachael (Ctss Bath)1613-1680		Fane
2	Fanshawe Alice(Hatton)1581-1624	w 1	
P	Farington Anne		portrait
3	Fassett Ann	sig	Gawdy
2	Faunt Elizabeth	w 1	Coke
2	Felton Doll 1597-	w 1	Gawdy
2	Felton Susanna	w 1	Gawdy
2	Feria Jane Duchess of	sig	+ message
2	Fettiplace Elinor c.1570-1647	w 1	mss not seen
2	Finch Elizabeth 1596-1651		nun Franc.
2	Finch Frances	w 1	Gawdy
3	Fitch Dorothy	sig	Barrington
2	Fitton Alice	w 1	Newdigate
3	Fitton Anne	sig	Glynde
3/2	Fitton Jane d.1638	w 1	Glynde
2	Fitton Mary 1578-1647	w 1	Newdigate
1	Fitzalan Joanna 1534-1576		see Lumley
P	Fitzalan Mary d.1557		portrait
-	Fitzgerald Elizabeth c.1528-1589		see Clinton
2	Fitzroy Mary (Duchess Richmond)		Reformers
M	Fleming		monument + book
2	Fortescue Helen		nun Poor Cl.
2	Fowler Clare 1584-1656		nun Poor Cl.
2	Framlingham Elizabeth	sig	+ message
3	Francis Goodwief		teacher

3	Franck Margaret 1605-1647		nun Franc. lay sister
2	Frankland Joyce		ed. Ben.
2	Fulwood Mary	w 1	Coke
1	Gage Anna		nun M. Ward
1	Gage Colette 1592-1615		nun Poor Cl. Abbess
2	Gage Columba 1555-1641		nun Ben.
2	Gage Elizabeth	w 1	Hengrave
2	Gage Helen		nun Franc.
2	Gage Mary	w 1	Hengrave
2	Gage Mary 1586-1614		nun Ben.
2	Gage Teresa 1593-1654		nun Ben.
3	Gainsford Catherine -1628		read
3	Gamage Barbara 1562-1615		
2	Garnett Helen		nun Aug.
1	Garnett Margaret		Aug. Chantress
3	Garnett Margaret	sig	Lost
2	Gascoigne Catherine 1600-1637		nun Ben.
2	Gascoigne Margaret 1608-1637		nun Ben.
3	Gatesby Anne	sig	Fane
1	Gavin Frances		nun Ben. Abbess
1	Gawdy Anne 1567-1594		
2	Gawdy Dorothy 1574-1621	w 1	Gawdy
2	Gawdy Elizabeth	w 1	Gawdy
2	Gawdy Lettice d.1630	w 1	Gawdy
2	Gawdy Mary	sig	message
2	Gawen Marie 1605		nun Franc.
2	Gawen Frances 1576-1640		nun Ben.
2	Gawen Gertrude 1608-1654		nun Franc.
3	Geoffray Temperance	sig	Wynn
2	Gerard M	w 1	Barrington
2	Gibbes Ann		nun Poor Cl.
2	Gifford Ann 1604-1633		nun Poor Cl.
2	Gifford Dorothy 1604-1673		nun Poor Cl.
3	Gifford Frances	sig	
2	Gifford Mary		nun Ben.
2	Gifford Ursula 1607-1688		nun Poor Cl.
2	Gildrige Bridget 1574-1647		nun Ben.
2	Glemham Anne	w 1	JC
2	Godfrye Hester	w 1	
2	Golding Mary 1595-1661		nun Poor Cl.
3	Goodwyn Mary		teacher
2	Gore Joan	w 1	Coke
2	Gorges Katherine	w 1	Smyth
2/3	Gouge Elizabeth d.1626		read
1	Gough Mary d.1613	w 1	nun
2	Goulding Bridget		nun
2	Gower Ann Lady	w 1	
2	Graham Kate	w 1	Dering
1	Gray Alexia		nun Ben.
1	Greenbury Catherine		nun Franc. Abbess
-	Grenville Grace 1598-		mss not seen

2	Gresham Ann	w 1	Bacon
2	Greville Elizabeth	w 1	Coke
2	Grey Bridget	w 1	Wynn
3	Griffin Margaret	sig	Throckmorton
1	Grymeston Elizabeth d.1603		book
2	Gyl Helen 1581-1627		nun Franc.
3	Habington Dorothy	sig	Lost
3	Hamblyn Mrs		teacher
3	Hamer Jane	sig	Clenennau
2	Hampden Elizabeth	w 1	Barrington
2	Hare Mary	w 1	Gawdy
1	Harlestone Margaret		book
1/2	Harley Brilliana 1598-1643	w 1	lat. & fr.
1	Harrington Lucy(Bedford)1582-1627		mss not seen
3	Hart Barbara	sig	Gawdy
2	Hartopp Mary	w 1	Coke
2	Hastings Bridget		cld write,Middleton
2	Hastings Sara	sig	Herrick
2	Hatton Elizabeth 1578-1646	sig	Coke
2	Hatton Jane		nun Aug.
2	Havers Frances 1581-1647		nun Poor Cl.
2	Hawkins Anne 1609-		nun Franc.
2	Hawkins Benedict 1587-1661		nun Ben.
2	Hawkins Margaret		ed. benefactor
3	Hayward Susan	sig	
2	Haywood Mary 1589-1661		nun Poor Cl.
3	Heneage Anne	sig	JC
2	Herbert Frances		nun Aug.
3	Herbert Margaret	sig	JC
-	Herbert Mary		see Sidney
3	Herne Mary	sig	lost
2	Herrick Elizabeth	sig	+ note Herrick
3	Herrick Elizabeth	sig	Herrick
2	Herrick Joan	w 1	Herrick
2	Herrick Julian	w 1	Herrick
2	Herrick Marie dau.	w 1	Herrick
3	Herrick Mary	sig	Herrick
3	Herrick Susanna	sig	Herrick
2	Hertford Frances	w 1	
2	Hervey Penelope	w 1	portrait Gage
3	Heveningham Abigail	sig	Lost JC
3	Heveningham Mary d.1635	sig	Gawdy
3	Heydon Anne	sig	Bacon
3	Heyman Emlen	sig	Lost
2	Heywood Elizabeth	w 1	Hengrave
2	Hill Anne	w 1	Gawdy
2	Hobart Barbara		nun Poor Cl.
1	Hobart Lady Frances 1603-1664		
2	Hobart Dorothy	w 1	Dering
2	Hobart Mary	w 1	Gawdy
2	Hoby Elizabeth Lady	w 1	
1	Hoby Margaret 1571-1633	w 1	diary

2	Hockley Dorothy 1595-1642		nun Franc.
2	Hockley Margery 1601-1642		nun Franc.
3	Holcroft Isobel (Rutland)	sig	Lodge
3	Holcroft Mary	sig	
2	Holland Mary	w 1	Gawdy
2	Holles Anne	w 1	Coke
2	Holles Elizabeth 1578-1608		
2	Holt Catherine 1606-1672		nun Franc.
2	Holt Margarite 1608-1654		nun Franc.
2	Holt Marie		nun Franc.
2	Hone Elizabeth 1602-1672		nun Poor Cl.
3	Honor Elizabeth	sig	Bacon
2/3	Honywood Joyce		Reformers
2/3	Honywood Mary 1627-1620		portraits Reformers
2	Hooke Jane	w 1	Barrington
3	Hopton Isabel	sig	Ingram
3	Horde Dorothy	sig	Gawdy
3	Hoskins Mary 1603-1667		nun Ben. lay sister
-	Hotham Jane 1578-1611		see Cholmley
3	Howard Annes d.1601	sig	JC
-	Howard Catherine		see Nottingham
3	Howard Lady Charity	sig	JC
-	Howard Douglas		see Sheffield
3	Howard Elizabeth	sig	JC
3	Howard Elizabeth	sig	Lost
3	Howard Frances (Bindon)	sig	
3	Howard Frances (Kildare)	sig	JC
-	Howard Jane d.1593		see Westmorland
-	Howard Katherine		see Berkeley
3	Howard Kathryn Lady	sig	Hengrave
-	Howard Margaret		see Norfolk
3	Howard Margaret Lady	sig	Lost
3	Howard Martha	sig	Lost
1	Howard Mary	sig	Lost
2	Huberd Elizabeth	w 1	
2	Huddleston Mary		nun Franc.
2	Huicke Ursula 1570-1638		nun Ben.
3	Hulton Mary	sig	V & A cushion
2	Hungerford Anne	w 1	
2	Hunne Cecily	w 1	Gawdy
3	Hunsdon Anne Lady	sig	Lost
2	Huntingdon Katherine d.1620		Reformers
3	Hyde Elizabeth	sig	Lost
P	Hynde Lady		portrait
2	Ingleby Anne 1593-1626		nun Ben.
2	Ingleby Elizabeth 1598-1662		nun Franc.
1	Ingleby Grace 1597-1639		nun Franc. Novice Mistress
2	Ingleby Marie 1597-1658		nun Franc.
1	Inglis Esther 1571-1624	w 1	calligrapher
2	Ingram Elizabeth	w 1	Ingram
2	Ingram Mary	w 1	Ingram

2	Iremonger Dorothy		nun Franc.
2	Iremonger Jane 1610-		nun Franc.
2	Isham Judith		library/read
2	James Aurea 1596-1669		nun Ben.
3	James Eleanor	sig	Coke
2	James Martha 1593-1625		nun Poor Cl.
2	Jasburgh Mrs	w 1	Hengrave
1	Jenkinson Anne		book
3	Jermyn Ann	sig	Hengrave
2	Jerningham Ann 1601-1636		nun Franc.
1	Jerningham Elizabeth d.1667		nun Franc. singer
2	Jerningham Eugenia 1610-1670		nun Poor Cl.
1	Jerningham Marie 1600-1662		nun Franc. organist
1	Joceline Elizabeth 1595-1622		writer
2	Johnson Mary		w 1
3	Jones Anne	sig	Clenennau
3	Jones Jane	sig	Clenennau
2	Judith		teacher/lute
2	Kemp Brigitt d.1639		nun Franc.
2	Kempe Marie		nun Ben.
3	Kemp Petronilla d.1628		nun Franc. lay sister
3	Kenion Helen 1604-1645		nun Ben. lay sister
2	Kerton Elizabeth 1603-1671		nun Poor Cl.
1	Keynes Catherine 1589-1646		nun Poor Cl. Novice Mistress
2	Kinsman Lettice		nun Franc.
1	Knatchbull Lucy 1584-1629		nun Ben. Abbess
3	Knollys Anne	sig	Lost
3	Knollys Eliz Lady Leighton	sig	Lost/Zouche
3	Knollys Elizabeth	sig	
3	Knollys Katherine	sig	Lost
2	Knollys Lettice 1540-1634	sig	+ mess/portrait
3	Knollys Margaret	sig	Aston
3	Knyvett Katherine d.1646		no letters
-	Knyvett Muriel		see Parry
2	Kytson Elizabeth	w 1	Kytson
2	Kytson Margaret d.1561	w 1	Hengrave
2	Kytson Margaret/Cavendish	w 1	
2/1	Kytson Mary d.1639 (Darcy)	w 1	virginalls Hengrave
2	Laburn Susan		nun Aug.
3	Lamplugh Ruth	sig	Barrington
2	Langdale Flavia 1600-1672		nun Ben.
2	Lany Ann	w 1	Gawdy
1	Lanyer Aemilia 1569-1649		poetry
3/2	Lassells Elleanor	w 1	Clifton
3	Leaver Anne		money for ed.
2	Leeke Barbara 1570-1647		nun Ben.
3	Leeke Bridget	sig	Clifton
3	Legard Susannah 1578-1611		see Cholmley
1	Legge Elizabeth 1580-1685		Ballard, class ed.
1	Leigh Dorothy		book

2	Leighton Elizabeth	w 1	Wynn
2	Leighton Elizabeth	w 1	Guernsey
2	Leighton Elizabeth	w 1	JC
3	Lemare Mary		teacher
1	Lenthall Agnes 1582-1651		nun Ben. Abbess
3	Lenton Mrs		teacher
3	LeStraunge Anne	sig	
2	Ligon Margaret	w 1	
-	Lincoln		see Clinton
2	Line Anne		Ben.
2	Littleton Meryel	w 1	Gawdy
2	Lloyd Mary	w 1	Glynde
1	Locke Anne		trans. Calvin
3	Long Jane	sig	Hengrave
2	Long Mary	w 1	Hengrave
2	Lovedon Elizabeth 1591-1642		nun Franc.
1	Lovel Elizabeth		nun Ben.
1	Lovel Mary		nun Carmelite
			founder
2	Lovell Christina 1597-1639		nun Ben.
2	Lucas Elizabeth d.1647	w 1	ed. children
2	Lucy Frances	sig	+ mess
2	Lumbos Elizabeth	w 1	nun Aug.
2	Lumley Lady Elizabeth	w 1	JC
1	Lumley Joanna		trans. Latin/Greek
P	Mainwaring Lady		portrait
P	Manners Bridget		portrait
2/1	Manners Elizabeth d.1654		virginalls/sing
1	Manners Frances (Neville) d.1576		music
-	Manners Katherine		see Villiers
2	Manock Dorothy 1592-1632		nun Ben.
2	Mansell Elizabeth 1551-	w 1	Gawdy
3	Mantell Anne		teacher
3	Marbery Elizabeth	sig	Lost
2	Marbury Elizabeth	w 1	Gawdy
2	Marcher Elizabeth 1605-1682		nun Poor Cl.
3	Martin Jane 1588-1631		nun Ben. lay sister
2	Martin Elizabeth 1609-1686		nun Poor Cl.
2	Masham Elizabeth	w 1	Barrington
2	Matlock Teresia 1601-1650		nun Ben.
3	Matrevys Ellen		teacher
2	Maurice Jane	w 1	Clenennau
2	Meredith Elizabeth		
2	Meriton Mary	w 1	Ingram
2	Merry Penelope	w 1	Hengrave
1	Mildmay Grace 1552-1620	w 1	
2	Mingay Mary d.1649	w 1	Gawdy
2	Molyns Elizabeth	w 1	Herrick
3	Monmouth Eliz Ctss of	sig	Glynde
3	Montague Magdalen 1538-1608	sig	JC
3	Montague Mary	sig	JC
1	More Agnes		nun book



-	More Anne		m Donne
2	More Anne 1600-1662		nun Aug.
2	More Bridget 1609-1692		nun Ben.
P	More Frances (m Oglander) 1590-1644		portrait
1	More Grace 1591-1666		nun Ben. book
1	More Helen 1606-1633		nun Ben. book
2	More Joane	w 1	nun
2	Morgan Anastasia 1577-1646	'	nun Ben.
2	Morgan Anne 1604-1640		nun Ben.
2	Morgan Marie	w 1	Scudamore
2	Morris Mary 1604-1661		nun Poor Cl.
2	Morris Martha 1604-1663		nun Poor Cl.
3	Moryson Dorothie	sig	
3	Mostyn Mary	sig	Wynn
2	Moundeford Abigail	w 1	Paston
2	Moundeford Dorothy	w 1	Paston
3	Myddleton Anne	sig	Chirk
2	Myddleton Mary 1598-1675	w 1	portrait
P	Neville Catherine		portrait
1	Neville Jane (Ctss Westmorland)		Ballard
P	Neville Mary (Dacre of South)		portrait
2	Newdigate Anne 1574-1618	w 1	née Fitton
3	Newton Nazareth	sig	Lost
3	Newton K	sig	Lost
2	Noel Julian	w 1	Herrick
2	Norfolk Margaret Dchs 1540-1564	w 1	Hengrave
2	North Dorothy	sig	will
1	Northumberland Anne Cts d.1591		
2	Northampton Helena Cts d1635	sig	Smyth
3	Nottingham Margaret Cts	sig	JC
3	Offaly Lettice (Digby) d.1658	sig	Digby
3	Orpwood Elizabeth 1574-1638	sig	Herrick
2	Osborne Margaret	w 1	Fane
P	Owen Alice 1547-1613		portrait ed. founder
3	Owen Anne	sig	Wynn
1	Owen Jane		nun book
3	Owen Jane	sig	Clenennau
-	Oxford Ctss Anne		see Cecil
2	Oxinden Elizabeth		see Dallison
2	Oxinden Eliz. d.1588		nee Brooker
2	Oxinden Katherine d.1642	w 1	Oxinden
2	Oxinden Margaret	w 1	Oxinden
2	Oxinden Mary	w 1	Oxinden
3	Packington Dorothy	sig	Hengrave
2	Par Anne (Ctss Pembroke)	sig	Lodge
2	Paris Christina 1606-1646		nun Ben.
1	Parker Ellen 1581-1639		nun Poor Cl. Vicaress
2	Parrott Dorothy		ed. ref to
2	Parry Blanche 1508-1590	sig	tomb + book
3	Parry Muriel d.1616		letters to
2	Partridge Margaret	w 1	

3	Partridge Margaret		teacher
2	Paston Kathrin	sig	Lost
2	Paston Catherine 1593-1640		nun Ben.
2	Paston Katherine 1578-1628	w 1	Paston
2	Paston Francesca 1604-1652		nun Ben.
2	Paul Margaret		nun Poor Cl.
M	Paulet Sara d.1608		monument + book
2	Pavie Anne 1581-1631	'	nun Franc.
2	Peck Anne	w 1	JC
2	Pelham Bess		music
2	Penruddocke Constantia 1601-1672		nun Ben.
2	Pepys Jane	w 1	Gawdy
1	Percy Mary 1568-1642		nun Abbess book
3	Percy Mary 1596-1670		lay sister Ben.
3	Percy Mrs		teacher
2	Periam Elizabeth 1541-1621		ed. founder
2	Perkins Anne 1603-1658		nun Poor Cl.
2	Perkins Jane 1610-1661		nun Franc.
2	Perkins Mary 1597-1639		nun Poor Cl.
2	Perkins Mary 1610-1646		nun Franc. musician
2	Perrot Dorothy d.1619(Northmbrlnd)		ed.
2	Persey Mrs		teacher/virginals
2	Pershall Lucie 1609-1637		nun Ben.
2	Persons Mary 1590-1642		nun Ben.
2	Petre Anne née Mostyn	sig	autobiography
2	Peyton Mary Lady	w 1	Oxinden
2	Phelips Bridget	w 1	Smyth
2	Phelips Elizabeth	w 1	Smyth
2	Philips Marie 1596-1654		nun Ben.
2	Philipson Frances		nun
2	Pickford Mary 1599-1660		nun Poor Cl.
2	Plowden Margaret		nun Aug.
1	Pole Mary		nun Aug. Prioress
2	Poole Rosamunde 1608-1654		nun Poor Cl.
1	Porter Angela		SPD
2	Porter Olivia d.1663		SPD
2	Poulett A	w 1	Smyth
2	Poulett Elizabeth	w 1	Smyth
1	Poulton Eugenia d.1645		nun Ben. Abbess
M	Poulton Susan		tomb + book
2	Powel Magdalen d.1629		nun Franc.
3	Powell Eleanor	sig	Coke
3	Powlett Annes (Winchester)	sig	JC
1	Price Cecelie		nun Ben.
1	Primrose Diana fl.1630		Poet
2	Prince Marie	w 1	Dewes
2	Proud Mary née Sprakeling	w 1	Oxinden
1	Prow Anne 1590-1671		nun Poor Cl. Rev Mother
3	Pugh Jane	sig	
2	Radcliffe Ann 1595-1639		nun Poor Cl.
2	Radcliffe Dorothy 1594-1639		nun Poor Cl.

1	Radcliffe Elizabeth 1589-1645		nun Poor Cl. Vicaress/Teacher
2	Radcliffe Margaret		nun Poor Cl.
3	Radcliffe Mary	sig	Lost
3	Raleigh Eliz 1565-1647	sig	
2	Ramsay Mary		ed. benefactor
2	Randall Mrs		teacher
2	Rayner Elizabeth 1589-1647	.	nun Poor Cl.
3	Revett Griseld	sig	Hengrave
2	Rich Penelope 1563-1607	w 1	
2	Ridgeway Frances	w 1	
2	Risdon Joane 1608-1675		nun Ben.
3	Roberts Jane 1593-1649		nun Franc.
2	Rogers Mary	w 1	
2	Rookwood Ann		nun Aug.
2	Rookwood Dorothy		nun Aug.
2	Rookwood Elizabeth		nun Ben.
1	Rooper Mary 1598-1650		nun Ben. Abbess
1	Roper Margaret		class ed.
2	Rorpe Mary	w 1	Gawdy
2	Rottman Mary	w 1	Glynde
-	Royden Elizabeth	w 1	Twisden
3	Rugge Frances (Lady Crumwell)	sig	JC
P	Rushout Anne		portrait
-	Russell Elizabeth		see Cooke
-	Russell Margaret		see Clifford
3	Rutland Elynor	sig	Gawdy
-	Rutland Isabel		see Holcroft
2	Sacheverell Anne	w 1	Coke
3	Sackville Anne d.1581	sig	will
E	Sackville Anne d.1595		epitaph
3	Sadler Eleanor 1542-1622		tomb + book
2	Sallisbury Elizabeth 1597-1661		nun Poor Cl.
3	Saltonstall Christian	sig	Gawdy
3	Salusbury Jane	sig	Wynn
2	Sanford Ann		nun Poor Cl.
2	Saunders Isabella 1603-1655	w 1	Twisden
3	Savile Marie	sig	dau JC
2	Scroop Philadelphia	w 1	JC
2	Scudamore Elizabeth	w 1	
2	Scudamore Mary Lady d.1632	sig	
1	Scudamore Mary		nun Aug. organ
1	Seager Jane		wrote shorthand
1	Seymour Anne		Ballard
3	Seymour Anne		ed. daus & sons
1	Seymour Jane 1541-1560		Ballard
1	Seymour Margaret		Ballard
2	Sheffield Douglas	w 1	JC
2	Sheldon Catherine d.1650		nun Ben.
3	Shelton Elizabeth	sig	Lost
3	Shelton Mary	sig	Lost
-	Sherrington		see Mildmay

3	Shipden Margaret		teacher
3	Shirley Dorothy d.1634		inventory
1	Shirley Elizabeth d.1641		nun Aug.
3	Shrewsbury Grace Ctss	sig	Lodge
2	Shrewsbury Mary d.1632	w 1	
3	Sidney Frances 1531-1589	sig	ed. founder
1	Sidney Mary 1561-1621		
3	Sidney Mary Ly(Cts Pembroke)	sig'	Lost
2	Simson Mary	w 1	Gawdy
2	Skeffington Cecily	w 1	Dering
2	Skeffington Elizabeth	w 1	Dering
2	Skinner Marie 1602-1629		nun Franc.
2	Skymer Elizabeth	w 1	
3	Sleford Lucie 1567-		nun Franc. lay sister
2	Smith Elizabeth d.1635		nun Ben.
2	Smith Ethelred 1598-1666		nun Ben.
2	Smith Margaret		nun Ben.
2	Smith Renata d.1644		nun Ben.
2	Smith Scholastica 1584-1660		nun Ben.
2	Smyth Elizabeth d.1658	w 1	Smyth
2	Smyth Florence c.1611-1676	w 1	Smyth
2	Smyth Mary	w 1	Smyth
3	Smythesone Elizabeth	sig	Lost
2	Southcott Elizabeth 1580-1631		nun Ben.
2	Southwell Anne	w 1	Herrick
3	Southwell Elizabeth Lady	sig	JC
1	Speght Rachel		book, Latin
2	Spencer Alice (Ctss Derby)	sig	library
2	Spencer Anne (Lady Compton)	sig	+ mess. JC
3	Spencer Elizabeth	sig	Wynn
3	Spencer Penelope		ed. children Althorp
2	Spring Anne	w 1	Hengrave
2	St John Lucy		see L Hutchinson
3	Stafford Elizabeth	sig	Lost
3	Stafford Cath.(Cs.Westmorland)	sig	Lodge
2	Standish Ann 1606-1664		nun Poor Cl.
3	Stanford Ctss of	sig	Clifton
1	Stanford Frances		nun Aug. Prioress
3	Stanhope Anne(Somerset)d1587	sig	will
-	Stanhope Jane(Ly Berkeley)		see Berkeley
3	Stanhope Margaret Lady	sig	
3	Stanhope Susan Lady	sig	JC
3	Stanley Mary	sig	JC
2	Stanley Venetia (Digby)1600-1633		cld write
2	Sternold Margaret 1597-1674		nun Poor Cl.
2	Steward A	w 1	Gawdy
3	St Loe Elizabeth	sig	Lost
3	Stradling Mary	sig	Digby
3	Strange Margaret Lady	sig	Lost
3	Strangeways Joan Lady	sig	

2	Strode Ann	w 1	Harley
1	Stuart Arabella 1575-1615		ed + music
2	Stubbes Katherine 1571-1590		
3	Stuteville Mary	sig	Gawdy
3	Stydolf Elizabeth	sig	
3	Suffolk Katherine Duchess	sig	Reformers
-	Sussex Frances		see Sidney
-	Sutcliffe Alice		writer
2	Swan Anne	sig	writer + mess.
3	Talbot Anne	sig	JC
3	Talbot Anne (Wharton)	sig	Lodge
3	Talbot Elizabeth (Dacre)	sig	Lodge
2	Talbot Eliz(Shrewsbury)1520-1608	w 1	JC
3	Talbot Mary (Northumberland)	sig	Lodge
3	Talbot Mary (Pembroke)	sig	
3	Taverne Anne 1603-1661		nun Ben. lay sister
2	Taylor Elizabeth 1594-1664		nun Poor Cl.
1	Taylor Louisa 1609-1667		nun Poor Cl. Novice
			Mistress
2	Taylor Lucy	w 1	
2	Taylor M	w 1	Gawdy
1	Taylor Mary 1596-1658		nun Poor Cl.
			Vicaress
3	Taylor Mrs		teacher
Pa	Teerlinck Lavinia		painter
2	Thacker Lettice 1606-1662		nun Franc.
2	Tholeward Ann 1569-1613		nun Poor Cl.
3	Thomond Mary	sig	Smyth
2	Thomson Margaret 1574-1613		nun Ben.
2	Thornburgh Clare	w 1	Digby
2	Throckmorton Agnes	w 1	Throckmorton
3	Throckmorton Anne	sig	
1	Throckmorton Magdalen		nun Aug.
2	Throckmorton Mary d.1632	w 1	portrait
3	Throkemorton A	sig	Gawdy
1	Thwaites Elizabeth 1592-1675		nun Poor Cl.
			Vicaress
2	Thynne Maria d.1611		mss not seen
2	Thynne Joan 1558-1612		mss not seen
2	Tichbourne Barbara 1601-1658		nun Franc.
2	Tichbourne Frances 1602-1635		nun Franc.
2	Tichburn Elizabeth		nun Ben.
1	Tildesley Elizabeth 1586-1654		nun Poor Cl. Abbess
2	Tillyard Elizabeth 1603-1630		nun Poor Cl.
2	Timperley Anne 1606-1640		nun Ben.
2	Timperly Elinor 1606-1671		nun Ben.
2	Tirwhitt Elizabeth	w 1	Clifton
1	Tishem Catherine		Ballard class. ed.
2	Tooley Margaret	w 1	Gawdy
2	Townshend Anne 1573-1622	w 1	Bacon
2	Tracy Elizabeth	w 1	Gawdy
3	Travers Mary		epitaph/could read

1	Tredway Letice 1593-1677		nun Aug. founder school
2	Trentham Mechtilda 1600-70		nun Ben.
3	Tresham Lady	sig	music
2	Tresham Winifred 1598-1665		nun Ben.
3	Trevor Margaret d.1646	sig	Glynde
2	Tuttoft Jane	w l	Bacon
2	Twisden Anne 1574-1638	w l	Twisden
-	Twisden Isabella		see Saunders
1	Tyler Margaret		book transl.
2	Tynte Anne	w l	
2	Tyringham Frances	w l	Smyth
2	Tyringham Dorothy	w l	Smyth
1	Tyrwhit Elizabeth		prayers Bentley <sup>4</sup>
2	Underwoode Anne	w l	Barrington
2	Unton Dorothy d.1634	w l	Dering
3	Unwin Sarah		teacher
2	Vane Elizabeth d.1568		Reformers
P	Vavasour Anne		portrait
1	Vavasour Mary 1606-1676		nun Ben. wrote Chronicles
2	Verney Margaret d.1641	w l	Coke
2	Villiers Kath. d.1649	w l	Buckingham
2	Vincent Ann	w l	Throckmorton
3	Wadham Dorothy 1534-1618	sig	
2	Waldegrave Apolonia 1602-1638		nun Ben.
3	Walker Hester	sig	Herrick
2	Walleston Frances 1577-1632		nun Poor Cl.
3	Walpole Mary	sig	+ mess. Bacon
2	Walsingham Anne		will, books
-	Walsingham Frances		see Essex
1	Ward Mary 1585-1645		class ed.
2	Ward Teresa		Carmelites
2	Warwick Anne Ctss	w l	
2	Watson Frances 1608-1660		nun Ben.
2	Watson Mary 1583-1630		nun. Ben.
1	Weamys Anne		book
1	West Margarite 1601-1653		nun Fran. Abbess
3	Westmorland Jane Ctss	sig	
1	Weston Jane 1582-1612		Poet
2	Wharton Dorothy	sig	+ mess. Herrick
1	Wheathill Anne		book
2	Whitbread Letice 1601-1650		nun Franc.
3	White Joanna	sig	(Oxford)
2	Whitecars Margaret		nun Ben.
3	Whitelock Joan d.1607		ed. children
1	Whitney Isabella fl.1567-1573		Poet
2	Wilford Barbara		nun Aug.
2	Wilford Mary	w l	Throckmorton

<sup>4</sup> Bentley, Monument of Matrones, 1582.

2	Wilkinson Katharine		w 1	Harley
2	Wilkinson Ellen d.1654			could write
1	Willcock Catharine 1596-1642			nun Franc. Abbess
2	Williams Lady Mary		w 1	Clifton
2	Willis Eleanor		w 1	Coke
2	Willoughby Bridget d.1629			could write
3	Willoughby Catherine (Suffolk)			ed. sons
3	Willoughby Elizabeth d.1595	sig		initials
1	Willoughby Margaret 1544-			ed. Middleton
2	Wintour Marie 1604-1630			nun. Ben.
2	Winwood Elizabeth		w 1	Glynde
2	Wiseman Bridget			nun Aug.
2	Wiseman Mary			nun Aug. Abbess
2	Wiseman Winefred/Agatha			nun Ben.
3	Wither Marie	sig		see <sup>5</sup>
2	Witherall Isabelle 1590-1618			nun Poor Cl.
2	Wollverston Frances 1603-1658			nun Franc.
1	Woodford Elizabeth d.1572			nun Louvain
3	Woodhouse Elizabeth Lady	sig		Lost
3	Wooley Elizabeth			Loseley
1	Worsley Anne d.1621			nun Carmelite
				Prioress
2	Worthington Joan			wrote will
2	Wright Ann 1604-1633			nun Poor Cl.
1	Wroth Mary 1587-1640(?)			music portrait
3	Wynn Katherine d.1591	sig		Wynn
3	Wynn Margaret née Cave	sig		Wynn
3	Wynn Mary	sig		Wynn
2	Wynn Sydney d.1632		w 1	Wynn
2	Yates Anne 1602-1667			nun Poor Cl.
2	Yates Frances 1597-1625			nun Poor Cl.
2	Yaxley Dorothy 1601-1653			nun Poor Cl.
2	Yaxley Margaret 1593-1666			nun Ben.
2	Yaxley Viviana 1599-1654			nun Ben. Novice
				Mistress
2	Yeates Jane 1604-1659			nun Franc.
2	Yelverton Margaret			int. ed.
3	Yelverton Mary	sig		
2	Yetsweirt Jane	sig		printer
2	Zouche Eleanora d.1611		w 1	
1	Zouche Elizabeth			see <sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> ed., A R Braunmuller, *A Seventeenth Century Letter Book*, Delaware, 1983.

<sup>6</sup> MacCurtain and O'Dowd, 1991.

